

# U.S. STREETPAPER ANTHOLOGY

## GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

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## Raped, robbed and branded sinners

by Douglas Yu

*Spare Change News – Boston, USA, 2/17/2014*

There's a book called *Youth in Crisis: What Everyone Should Know About Growing Up Gay*, edited by Mitchell Gold, which contains a series of interviews with young people. There is a story in there that is heartbreaking:

The Trevor Project, an American non-profit organization focused on suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth, received a call from a 16-year-old gay teen from just outside Boston. He told one of the counselors that he had taken ten Klonopins (an anti-anxiety medication), spent the night passed out at a friend's house, and thought he had been raped.

This gay teen frequently abused drugs and alcohol. "He revealed that he had been overdosing on Klonopin regularly just to see if it would kill him," as it is described in the story.

According to a recent study, there is an increasing number of LGBTQ young adults that face the same problems every day: mental health issues, violence, substance abuse and homelessness.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimates that the number of homeless and runaway youth ranges from 575,000 to 1.6 million per year. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's analysis of the available research suggests that between 20 and 40 percent of all homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. Given that between 3 and 5 percent of the U.S. population identifies as LGBTQ, it is clear that LGBTQ youth experience homelessness at a disproportionate rate.

In Boston, there are several agencies and drop-in centers that provide services and support to LGBTQ homeless youth. However, there is not a single shelter in that city that targets this group of people exclusively, yet.

Gary Gates, a researcher of LGBTQ demography at UCLA, has been involved in many studies of LGBTQ homeless youths for years. "I think the situation for LGBTQ youths varies dramatically depending on where they live. And there are other areas where it's quite a bit of a stigma attached with being LGBTQ," he said.

Gates pointed out that it is still quite unusual to have a shelter or provider that only serves LGBTQ people nationally. But things have started to change since the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) launched a new housing program for LGBTQ



Youths kick a gay rights activist during a protest against a proposed new law termed by the State Duma, the lower house of Parliament, as "against advocating the rejection of traditional family values" in central Moscow June 11, 2013. Photo by REUTERS/ Maxim Shemetov

homeless youth last November. This new program will provide 32 units of permanent supportive housing for LG-BTQ young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 in Greater Boston and Western Massachusetts, according to the MHSA's executive director, Joe Finn.

"Our responsibility is to house those who are homeless," Finn said. "That's why we exist."

For seven years, the MHSA has been dealing with different age groups that traditionally chronicle homeless people, Finn said. Their characteristics are marked by mental health issues, severe disabilities, substance abuse and addiction.

Today, the MHSA houses about 600 people, and almost 30 percent came right off the street.

"So they don't have to go to shelters," said Finn. "These adult shelters are not good places for any young adults, and it's a more difficult spot for LGBTQ young people. [A] shelter is just not a nice place to be, and the possibility of being victimized is tremendous."

LGBTQ kids are not just victimized by other homeless people in those shelters. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, family conflict is the primary cause of homelessness for all youth, LGBTQ or straight.

Fifty percent of gay teens received a negative reaction from their parents when they came out, and 26 percent of them were kicked out of their homes. More than one-third of them experienced a violent physical assault when they came out in normal shelters, which may have led them to leave a shelter or foster home because they actually felt

safer on the streets.

In the South, LGBTQ homeless young adults suffer not only from physical threats, but religious condemnation as well. In a recent phone interview with Rick Westbrook, the executive director of Lost-N-Found Youth Inc., a lot of shelters in the South are church-based. Lost-N-Found Youth Inc. is the only agency in Atlanta, GA that serves specifically LGBTQ homeless youth.

"If our kids get into those [church-based] shelters, they have to listen to how they are sinners and they are going to hell unless they stay in the closet," said Westbrook. "A lot of times, [they] get picked on, beaten up, raped and robbed in a normal shelter. So it's especially important for us to house them, so they can be around people like themselves, whether they are gay, lesbian, trans or bi."

On a freezing Saturday in late January, Westbrook and more than 100 volunteers – many of them straight – renovated a house that provides a temporary place for Atlanta's LGBTQ homeless youth to stay.

"It's important to us, to the community, to work together, so the kids can see straight people that actually care for them," Westbrook said.

Finn from the MHSA said that young adult homelessness manifests itself in many different ways, and that those impacted are forced to come up with other ways to survive instead of staying in traditional shelters.

"We don't want to make the same mistake like 30 years ago, say: 'Let's do shelters and then we are done,'" said Finn.

The MHSA supports recent changes in policy towards LGBTQ homeless persons on the national level. For Finn, the highlight of these contributions has been the improvement of services provided to the transgender homeless population.

"A few years ago, there were quite few shelters that accepted transgender people that I know," Finn said. "Quite honestly, it was discrimination."

Typically, shelters are divided into male shelters and female shelters. So if there is a male-to-female transgender person coming in, she may be assigned to live in a dorm full of women that have been traumatized by men.

"That was very concerning sometimes to those women," said Finn.

Finn is not fully satisfied with the over-all services within the shelter system provided to transgender people over the years.

"I think [that], due to a lot of training, some of the issues have changed, but it hasn't changed entirely," said Finn.

Westbrook from Lost-N-Found Youth Inc. agrees with Finn, acknowledging that transgender people are the most abused people in the country.

"A lot of our female-to-male transgender kids are girls who dress more like boys. They may have a straight name, but it's still easy to change their names. So it's easier to get them employed," Westbrook said. "But when it comes to things like male-to-female, I've had some who are in several different stages of transitions. Some are very passable. Some appear to be cross-dressing. You can tell them easily on the street."

For those transgender kids who are struggling with transitioning from one stage to the other, "they are not further on in their journey," Westbrook said. "Aside from being ostracized for being who they are, it's hard to find them employment."

In an effort to help transgender youth transition into a healthier stage, Lost-N-Found tries to hook the young transgender people up with older transgender people who made the transitions later in life, when they were more established in their careers.

In terms of helping LGBTQ homeless youth find a place to call home, the MHSA is not battling homelessness alone. They cooperate with the Youth On Fire program of the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts in Cam-

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## Over 300 renters in Los Angeles protest over housing crisis

by Eric Ares

*Community Connection – Los Angeles, USA, 5/05/2014*

On the morning of Wednesday, April 23, 2014, over 300 renters and allies from across Los Angeles, stood shoulder-to-shoulder and rallied on the south steps of LA City Hall to declare the City's first-ever Renters' Day. During the subsequent press conference, tenants from South LA, Little Tokyo, and Boyle Heights shared stories of the devastating impact that LA's housing crisis is having on families at all income levels. Afterwards, the large and energetic group overflowed City Council Chambers, where LA City Councilmember Gil Cedillo officially declared April 23 as Renters' Day.

"I've lived in Los Angeles for 18 years, and it's never been this bad or this hard to afford a place to live," said Leonard Woods, a renter in Downtown Los Angeles. "Something must be done. We need our City Council members to



Over 300 renters and allies from across Los Angeles, stood shoulder to shoulder and rallied on the south steps of LA City Hall to declare the City's first ever Renters' Day. Photo by Eric Ares

step up because people are working too hard just to see their families struggling so much." Leonard's experience is not unique in a city where 65 percent of residents are renters in a housing

market in which there are only 17 affordable units for every 100 low-income families.

## Chronic shortage of child psychiatrists in U.S.

by Noelle Swan

*Spare Change News – Boston, USA, 7/22/2013*

"I don't know exactly what happened to drive that young man in Aurora to shoot those people, but I do know that many people like him suffer while undiagnosed and untreated," said Jess Shatkin, an associate professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at New York University.

July 20, 2013, marked one year since James Eagan Holmes massacred 12 people and injured 70 more inside an

Aurora, Colorado movie theater. Since then, Adam Lanza opened fire in a Newtown, Connecticut elementary school; a 20-year-old college student killed four people in Orange County, California during a drive-by shooting; and a 19-year-old in New Orleans opened fire on a Mother's Day parade.

In each of these tragedies, images of isolated and despondent young male perpetrators have emerged in the aftermath. And after each tragedy, the nation vowed to launch a national discussion of mental health.

## LGBTQ youth challenges

continued from page 2

bridge, DIAL/SELF Youth & Community Services in Greenfield, and Justice Resources Institute in Boston for their new housing initiative.

"We don't do these things by ourselves, we fund the agencies doing these things," Finn said. "So far, we have three people housed. But I know that people in Youth On Fire are poised, ready to be housed shortly. They've identified 18 LGBTQ homeless persons."

In the Cambridge GLBT Commission monthly meeting recently, Cambridge City Councilor Marc McGovern said that funding to LGBTQ homeless youth programs is increasingly important, and funding to these programs is most likely to come from property taxes, commercial taxes and the human services department.

It has been two-and-a-half years since Queer rights advocates and LGBTQ youth protested in front of the historic Stonewall Inn in New York City to demand funding for homeless LGBTQ youth programs. The success of these protests in drawing attention and funding for their cause has inspired high hopes that the MHSA's new housing program will prove to be a similar blessing for many LGBTQ homeless youth in Massachusetts.

"We don't think it's the best first step to build shelters specifically for anybody," Finn said. "It's really not about housing them in segregated areas. They're not being housed because they are LGBTQ, they are housed as opposed to being out on the street."

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / Spare Change News – USA

In fact, millions of young people in America are suffering from untreated mental illness, and the U.S. healthcare system is not equipped to care for them, according to experts in child and adolescent psychiatry. The U.S. Surgeon General's office estimates that only 20 percent of emotionally disturbed children receive mental health services.

Those children do not automatically shed their emotional problems on their 18th birthday. They become adults with mental illness. Some find treatment as adults; some turn to drugs and alcohol to manage their symptoms; and some lose control.

The American Medical Association estimates that there are 15 million American children in need of psychiatric care and just 7,000 child and adolescent psychiatrists to treat them.

This discrepancy can leave families waiting months for their children see a therapist, which can take a toll on individual families and the community, said Christopher Thomas, the director of child psychiatry residency training at the University of Texas, Galveston.

Untreated adolescents who struggle with emotional problems can fall behind in school, develop substance abuse problems and engage in dangerous and risky behavior, Thomas said.

"Well over 80 percent of youth in juvenile justice placement have a substance abuse problem. More than half likely have a mental disorder," Thomas said.

"Renters are at the core of Los Angeles' economic recovery, making up more than 65 percent of our City's residents. Yet, renters at all income levels continue to face real displacement. Today, the City recognizes this critical population and the need for relief. Renters make LA work, we need to make LA work for renters," said Councilmember Gil Cedillo.

While a feeling of celebration and accomplishment could be felt throughout the crowd as residents exited City Hall, the group recognized that the day was only the first of many steps needed to address this urgent issue. Renters make LA work. It's time LA we make LA work for renters. To get more information, contact any of the SLA BHC organizations or visit the Renters' Day Facebook page: [facebook.com/IAMAR-ENTER](https://www.facebook.com/IAMAR-ENTER).

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / Community Connection – USA

"The juvenile justice system is becoming the *de facto* mental health provider for a large number of these youths, sadly."

Thomas has spent over a decade studying the shortage and distribution of child and adolescent psychiatrists in the United States. His 1999 paper in the Journal of the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists (AACAP) spurred the AACAP to launch a task force on workforce issues, which aims to recruit medical students into the specialty.

Both Shatkin – the current chair of the AACAP Workforce Issues Committee – and Thomas said that recruiting new students into the field continues to be an uphill battle more than a decade later.

The specialty requires an additional two years of training beyond the three years of general psychiatry studies. The extra time and student loans discourage potential students, Shatkin said.

"The best we can hope for is staying pretty much in the situation that we are already in, but I fear that we might actually be falling further behind," Thomas said.

Meanwhile, children around the country wait months for the necessary care.

While the number of untreated children varies around the country, the

CHILD THERAPISTS, page 15



## U.S. Freedom Schools tackling racism

by Rosette Royale

*Real Change – Seattle, USA, 8/26/2013*

The Tyree Scott Freedom School, a joint program from the People's Institute Northwest and the American Friends Service Center, is a nine-day workshop attended by young people aged 15-21 who discuss poverty, incarceration and youth-police relations.

Khalil Lee-Butler recalled the time a play-fight turned into a run-in with the cops.

It was last year, and Lee-Butler was hanging in South Seattle with a 16-year-old friend. His friend's younger brother, age 14, joined them, and the two brothers started horsing around. Nothing serious, said Lee-Butler, but seemingly out of nowhere, the police showed up.

Lee-Butler, now 19, said the police never paused to ask any questions or hear what he and his friend had to say. Instead, they arrested his friend and drove him away in a squad car. His friend spent three days in jail. At the court hearing, assault charges against his friend were dropped and he was released.

"It was just ridiculous," said Lee-Butler.

On one level, it didn't surprise him. Lee-Butler is multi-racial. His friend who was arrested is black. Institutional racism, Lee-Butler said, makes him and other people of mixed race targets for the police. The term institutional racism was coined by civil rights activist



Khalil Lee-Butler and Andrea Lopez participated in a "Speak Truth to Power" panel Aug. 2, 2013 at Seattle City Hall. The event was part of the Tyree Scott Freedom School. Photo by Minh Nguyen

Stokely Carmichael to describe societal patterns that impose oppressive conditions on the basis of race or ethnicity.

For the past two summers, Lee-Butler said he made use of a resource that helped him understand institutional racism and provided tools to dismantle it: the Tyree Scott Freedom School.

Held in late July and early August, Freedom School offers 15-to-21-year-olds an opportunity to discuss and analyze institutional racism, poverty and the prison industrial complex. The summer program culminated this year with a youth panel at Seattle City Hall on August 2. (A three-day freedom school

also occurs at the end of the year.) The program is free.

Lee-Butler said he was encouraged to attend in 2012 by friends and family members. He returned as one of 35 participants this year, he said, because last year's workshop opened his eyes to the pervasive nature of racism.

"I had seen these things every day," he said, "but I wasn't aware of what [they meant] at the time."

**Memories of Emmett and Travyon**

Freedom School takes place outside of a formal classroom. Dustin Washington, director of the community justice pro-

gram at TFSC, said the program's core curriculum of undoing racism rarely gets discussed in school.

He said the workshop is named after Tyree Scott, a Seattle civil rights organizer and labor leader who was active from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. Scott worked on issues ranging from affirmative action to global economic justice. The first Freedom School occurred in 2001, and Washington said the program is more important than ever.

"Racism is killing our young people, our adults, our communities," said Washington, "and we need young people to step up and take their rightful place in the movement for social change."

Lee-Butler said that during one session, the group compared the deaths of Emmett Till and Travyon Martin. Till was a 14-year-old black youth from Chicago. While visiting relatives in Mississippi in 1955, he was accused of flirting with a white woman. In response, two white men brutally beat Till before shooting him dead. Martin was a 17-year-old black youth. While walking through a gated community in Sanford, Florida, in February 2012, Martin had an altercation with a volunteer in a neighborhood watch program, members of which found Martin suspicious. After an alleged tussle, George Zimmerman – a multiracial man – shot Martin dead. The suspects in both cases were acquit-

**FREEDOM SCHOOLS, page 15**

tained a strong presumption against divesting stock for reasons unrelated to investment purposes. Harvard is first and foremost an academic institution, and the endowment's primary purpose is to support the research and educational activities through which institutions of higher education make their distinctive contributions to society, including ground-breaking research and education on climate change."

The undergraduate student body passed a referendum with 72 percent in favor of divestment in November, earning the activists two unsatisfying meetings with Harvard trustees. Since then, there has been a rally at President Drew Faust's office, and just in late April, Harvard Law School joined the fray with their own referendum in support.

"When we held a rally outside of President Faust's office and the law students showed up in full force with the big-

**DIVESTMENT, page 5**

"The University has traditionally main-

## Crowd control: curbing our propensity to procreate

### An exclusive interview with award-winning journalist Alan Weisman

by Rosette Royale

*Real Change – Seattle, USA, 11/04/2013*

Even when you set a world record, it doesn't mean the world will ever know your name. Consider what happened to one member of a Russian peasant couple from the 1700s.

The known half of the pair is Feodor Vassilyev, and between 1725 and 1765, his first wife gave birth to 69 children. That's right: she had 16 pairs of twins, seven sets of triplets and four sets of quadruplets. All but two of those children survived past childhood. None of the publications that detailed the case, including the science journal *Lancet*, named the mother. Even so, the Guinness Book of World Records crowned her the woman who's given birth to the most children.

Today, women don't have over 60 kids in a lifetime. It's a good thing, too, because as it stands, the world couldn't handle the pressure. As of the writing of this article – on October 29 at 4 pm PST – the global population was 7.12 billion people, and our population keeps growing. Every four-and-a-half days, one million more children are born. UN officials predict that by 2100, there may very well be 10.9 billion of us. That would be, naturally, a world record.

Alan Weisman thinks it would be imprudent to hit that milepost. Indeed, Weisman, author of the international bestseller *The World Without Us*, believes that we should implement steps to reduce childbirth rates to preserve the planet – before it's too late.

## Harvard movement seeks fossil fuel divestment

continued from page 4

gest banners and the loudest chants, I think it conveyed to people that this isn't a crazy college kid thing," said Sean Hamidi, a law student organizing for divestment. "This is a genuine humanitarian issue that is going to take a widespread, societal response."

Hamidi, like other Divest activists, concedes that pulling the school's stocks from oil companies won't solve the climate crisis, but it brings the debate back to their turf, and allows better-functioning institutions like universities to build momentum and "eventually turn the ship of these bigger, broken institutions like Congress."



Journalist Alan Weisman's latest book, *Countdown* (2013), takes a hard look at the realities of human overpopulation. Photo by Alan Weisman

Not that he's a doomsayer. Indeed, in Weisman's new book, *Countdown: Our Last, Best Hope for a Future on Earth?* (Little, Brown and Company, 2013), you can sense his love of humanity. Yet he still believes we need a prescription to curb our propensity to procreate. To find answers, he traveled the globe, making stops in countries such as Niger, where women average between seven and eight children, the highest birth rate on Earth, and Japan, where the population has been dropping since 2006.

Weisman came to town on a book tour, and before his October 21 reading at Seattle Town Hall, we met at the Hotel Monaco and sat in white vinyl chairs that had the regal air of thrones. But there was nothing imperial about

Weisman. He leaned in close, huddled over a table with the fingers of his left hand pressed into his brow, as if he were studying a puzzle he couldn't quite solve. Over the course of 40 minutes, he talked in a steady, low voice about Pakistan, the Vatican, polygamy, and living through one of life's tragedies.

**RR: At the beginning of your book you mention that in 1815, the world's population was one billion. Now we've surpassed seven billion.**

**AW:** Yeah, that was fast.

**RR: Then you ask, "How the hell did that happen?" So, how the hell *did* it happen?**

**AW:** Well, up until about 300 years

ago, we were pretty much subject to the same laws of any other species: we existed, we procreated, we made copies of ourselves. We made extra copies of ourselves because we knew that, unfortunately, some of those kids died. In fact, most children did not make it to their fifth birthday – which, if we think about the pain of our ancestors, that's pretty sobering. On the other hand, that was normal. So women would have six or seven children in the hopes that some would survive.

Our species, when we'd actually gotten to a billion, it meant that we had made it a little easier on ourselves. The Industrial Revolution was helpful: people lived in closer quarters, there was more access to doctors – even if the doctors weren't very good. But doctors started getting real good in 1798, when Edward Jenner invented a vaccine for smallpox – our first vaccine – which was quickly followed by more vaccines and methods of eradicating insects that carried other diseases. We learned how to pasteurize milk; we learned how to wash our hands in hospitals. That alone was huge. Just the idea of using disinfectant in hospitals dropped the infant mortality rate: ten times the number of kids started to survive. So as a result of medical technology, more children were surviving infancy and more people were living longer, so they were still hanging around when other people were born.

And then, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two other things happened. The first was we figured out how to pull nitrogen out of the air and chemically apply it to soils. Before, the amount of plant life

**OVERPOPULATION, page 16**

visiting alumni, some attendees independently brought up divestment to President Faust, Welton said.

And Faust spent a good chunk of her commencement address talking about all of the great work Harvard is doing on climate change.

"I heard her commencement speech last year and she mentioned climate change once," Welton said. "So I think we've had a very big impact on her, to the point where [this year] she had to get up there and make the case that Harvard actually does care about climate change in front of all these people."

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Spare Change News – USA**



## U.S. attacked by UN for criminalizing homelessness

by Jeremy Rosen

*Street Roots – Portland, USA,*  
4/21/2014

My organization, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, works to end homelessness in the United States. As the Law Center's policy director, most people would expect me to be pounding the pavement here in Washington, D.C. – lobbying the administration and Congress for the funding and policy changes we need to ensure that every person in this country has safe, decent, affordable housing. However, people probably wouldn't expect me to spend a week in Geneva, Switzerland, lobbying at the United Nations. But I did – and let me tell you why.

The purpose of the trip was to highlight criminalization of homelessness at the United Nations Human Rights Committee's review of United States compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Thanks to the Law Center's advance advocacy, criminalization was made part of the Committee's "list of issues" to be discussed at the review, forcing the U.S. government to respond in its own report. The Law Center then issued a shadow report laying out the case for criminalization being a treaty violation.

In Geneva, I pressed the Human Rights Committee to find that criminalization of homelessness in the U.S. violates Article VII of the Covenant, which prohibits cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Committee Member Walter Kaelin asked the U.S. delegation a question about criminalization as cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment – straight from our report. And while the delegation responded with tepid platitudes, the Committee was taking our advocacy very seriously – the chair, Sir Nigel Rodney, indicated that criminalization would be one of the top issues for the Committee to address in its Concluding Observations – the Committee's findings and recommendations to the U.S. government.

Sure enough, on March 27, the Committee's report came out – and it was a doozy. The Concluding Observations recognized criminalization as cruel, inhuman and degrading, and noted concern that the practice is still routine. It also called on the U.S. to "engage with state and local authorities to: (a) abolish criminalization of homelessness laws and policies at state and local levels; (b) ensure close cooperation between all



Jeremy Rosen is policy director at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty in the USA, a leading organisation in the movement to end homelessness. Photo by Jeremy Rosen

relevant stakeholders including social, health, law enforcement and justice professionals at all levels to intensify efforts to find solutions for the homeless in accordance with human rights standards; and (c) offer incentives for decriminalization and implementation of such solutions, including providing continued financial support to local authorities implementing alternatives to criminalization, and withdrawing funding for local authorities criminalizing the homeless."

Now, you might say, *So what, the United Nations is always telling the U.S. government that it's doing things wrong, but does our policy ever change?* Well, I'll tell you just why this matters. First, the language is strong. In international law, "cruel, inhuman and degrading" is language typically used to describe torture. By using that language to describe homelessness, the United Nations has made a bold statement about just how poorly homeless people are treated in this country. Don't buy it? Think of Jerome Mordough, a homeless veteran who recently baked to death in a Rikers Island cell after having been arrested for trespassing in a public housing building so he could find a warm place to sleep. If that wasn't cruel, inhuman, and degrading, what is? Maybe the case of James Boyd, an Albuquerque man recently confronted by police for illegal outdoor camping. Despite being

unarmed, he was shot to death.

This language will also help us seek policy change. While criminalization measures are implemented at the local level, the department Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has

significant influence on cities across the country – thanks to all the money it doles out. We're currently

working with HUD to find ways to ensure that communities making the morally right and cost-effective choice to provide housing are rewarded, while communities adopting criminalization ordinances risk the loss of certain federal funds. We're also working with the Department of Justice, which can

investigate systematic criminalization as discrimination based on race or disability. Justice can also file amicus briefs in court; briefs that argue that criminalization is unconstitutional under the 8th Amendment, as cruel and unusual punishment. Sounds a lot like the "cruel, inhuman and degrading" language used by the United Nations, doesn't it? That U.N. language will backstop legal arguments opposing criminalization. We've also learned that some of the money Justice gives local police forces goes to hire officers who then criminalize homelessness; our advocacy will make sure this never happens again.

And finally, the U.N. report will also benefit advocacy by local groups fighting criminalization policies and practices. Rhetoric and framing are powerful tools. Groups like the Western Regional Advocacy Project and LA-CAN have joined the Law Center in using the human right to housing framing in support of their work, which includes efforts to pass homeless bills of rights. Criminalization efforts are antithetical to the realization of the right to housing. Would a mayor or City Council member seeking to ban camping or food sharing want to be called on the carpet for passing legislation that would allow the police to essentially torture homeless residents of the city? I don't think so.

Human rights advocacy won't end homelessness today, tomorrow or next week. But it provides a strong framework for the movement to end homelessness in this country. Don't forget one lesson learned from the civil rights movement: when international pressure is strong, the U.S. government will often feel compelled to make concessions.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Street Roots – USA**

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## America's unwanted tent cities

by Aaron Burkhalter

*Real Change – Seattle, USA, 4/21/2014*

Most homeless tent encampments that operated around the United States over the last few years were illegal, according to a study by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty and the Yale Law School.

A report titled, "Welcome Home: The Rise of Tent Cities in the United States," surveyed 117 tent encampments across the country and found that most were unwelcome by local governments, which often evicted them.

Eight of the 117 surveyed encampments were legal based on city laws. Ten more were not formally legalized, but local cities were not choosing to evict them.

In most cases, cities shut down camps without providing alternative shelter, the report found. More than 50 of the camps the study surveyed were evicted. Cities have threatened to evict several more.

Washington was the exception. The

### Jada's stand

by Nicole Christian

*Thrive Detroit / [actstheblog.com](http://actstheblog.com), 8/22/2012*

I know only one way to say this: Jada Pinkett Smith is one *baaaad mother*.

Brains. (Did you know she writes music, rocks, and paints as well as acts?) Beauty. Brass. Jada, as we fans love to call her, has it all – and best of all is her passion for using all that she's been given to act on behalf of others, an otherwise invisible segment of America's modern-day slaves.

You read that right: SLAVES; survivors of human trafficking.

Jada is currently filming a documentary for CNN's Freedom Project, a global multimedia effort to end human trafficking. She's posting daily video journals about her discoveries at [dontsellbodies.org](http://dontsellbodies.org). The documentary is the latest in a string of efforts from Jada.

"This old monster is still with us," the American actress told members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during a last year as she traveled to Washington, D.C., with three trafficking survivors.

Some estimates suggest that 27 million people around the world are trapped in



After the city of Seattle evicted Nickelsville from a site in May 2013, other Nickelsville camps like this one in the central district sprouted up. Photo by Wes Sauer

state is home to four of the eight tent encampments that were considered legal by researchers. These include Tent City 4, Tent City 3 and Nickelsville. The Washington Supreme Court determined in 2009 that churches have a constitutional right to host tent encampments. Washington cities can regulate but not block churches from hosting tent encampments.

The Seattle City Council declined to legalize tent encampments on non-church property in 2013. The city evicted Nickelsville from city-owned property on West Marginal Way Southwest in 2013. Nickelsville now operates two encampments through Seattle-area churches.

Encampments arise when cities do not



Jada Pinkett Smith in 2012. Photo by Vittorio Zunino

some form of modern slavery. At least 40,000 women, men and children are reported to be enslaved right here in the good-old USA.

Jada traveled to Washington, D.C. to campaign for the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. "The costs of allowing it to exist in our nation and abroad are much higher. It robs us of the thing we value most – our freedom. We know what that freedom is worth," she said in her testimony to U.S. Congress on July 17, 2012.

Jada credits her daughter Willow, 11, with opening her eyes to the crisis.

"Modern-day slavery wears a different face," she told the Huffington Post in an exclusive interview, "because you don't see chains."

Fellow actress and ACTivist, Salma Hayek, persuaded Jada to take another big step. Together, they produced a music video that offers an unflinching look at one of the ways traffickers manipulate and ultimately abduct young women.

"Many people believe that abduction and kidnapping is the number one method used for trafficking," she recently told CNN's Freedom Project.

provide sufficient shelter for the growing homeless population, according to the report.

"Tent cities are a result of the absence of other reasonable options," the report states.

The report recommends that cities create more shelter and housing options, stop enforcing municipal laws that criminalize tent encampments, and create Homeless Bill of Rights laws that establish that people have a right to housing.

Forty-five states and the District of Columbia had tent encampments at least once from 2008 to 2013. The report accounted for 117 encampments across the country, but there are likely more. More than half of the encampments were established in the last five years.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Real Change – USA**

"The number one method used for trafficking is love, the idea or the promise of... someone coming and saying, 'I'll take care of you.'"

The beauty of Jada's stand is that she appears to be ACTing from her heart, absent the usual Hollywood play at glamour. She's after something larger. Here's my read:

*Be about something bigger than yourself, and bring all that you are along for the ride.*

Jada makes it plain in her own words. "Be a force that changes a paradigm," she wrote recently to her more than 2.6 million Facebook followers.

Of course, when you are *Jada*, being a force of change is easy, a luxury, even. You move. You speak. Headlines follow. But even luxuries only carry one so far. The more potent measure of great ACTS and great ACTors is a mix of what Harriet Tubman, and so many others, had – crazy courage and a committed heart.

That Jada the Hollywood ACTress is choosing to stand at all tells me she has at least half of that.

ACT on Jada, ACT on!

Source: [actstheblog.com](http://actstheblog.com)



## Urban agriculture blooming in Chicago

by Suzanne Hanney and Ryan Herzog  
*StreetWise – Chicago, USA, 8/22/2012*

Growing Home, Inc. is a window into how the Chicago City Council's new urban agriculture ordinance, which created structure for both commercial farms and smaller, privately-run community gardens, has affected both forms of urban agriculture. Until the ordinance, Growing Home had to operate its Chicago properties under the title of "technical institute," said Harry Rhodes, executive director. The decade-old non-profit social enterprise focuses on providing on-the-job training to previously incarcerated, homeless and otherwise challenged individuals through employment in small-scale organic farming.

The ordinance, passed last September, eased overall costs for urban-production farms in terms of landscaping, and allowed cheaper fencing and fewer parking spaces, Rhodes said.

The ordinance is the second component of Mayor Rahm Emanuel's plans toward ending "food deserts," where fresh produce is harder to find than fast food, resulting in higher risks of diet-related issues like heart disease and diabetes, said Policy Director Mike Simmons. Emanuel's first priority is attracting more grocery stores to food deserts. In the meantime, Simmons says they "want to empower people to grow their own food."

Rhodes added that research shows adding green space to communities serves to lower violence: "Anytime you can take a vacant lot and turn it into productive space, especially with growing plants, it changes the atmosphere of the community."

The idea for making Englewood an "urban agriculture district" also comes from LISC Chicago and its Teamwork Englewood component, which led planning for the community's Quality of Life plan in 2005. Growing Home is a partner, and so is Openlands.

"The City has suggested Englewood as a potential center for a lot more urban agriculture because there's so much vacant space there," said Glenda Daniel, community greening director for Openlands. "Englewood was once a manufacturing and railroad center, and the argument [goes] that many places will never be as dense as they once were."

More commercial urban farms on the vacant land would attract more people and, in turn, more housing and business until the land can be developed.



This "after" photo of the Hermitage Street Garden shows what \$25 for seeds and raised beds can do for productive community spirit. Photo by Openlands

Rhodes said the Chicago Department of Housing and Economic Development has identified as many as 300 city-owned sites that could become urban-production farms, in line with the commercial portion of the ordinance. Right now, Growing Home runs the only two such properties.

Now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, Growing Homes operates four farms. Its first farm was in Downstate Marseilles, which raises produce for subscribers to Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSAs). It also operates a market garden at SuCasa in Back of the Yards. In 2007, it opened its year-round organic farm – still the only certified organic farm in Chicago – at 5814 S. Wood St. in Englewood. This farm also sells to Green City Market and at its own on-site farm stand for the public.

Just around the corner on Honore Street, between 58th and 59th, Growing Home is managing the first urban farm under the new Chicago City Council ordinance. The new farm is eight-tenths of an acre, in a former residential zone divided by an alley and an abandoned railroad overpass.

The object of the Honore Street farm will be to make urban agriculture sustainable, exclusive of grants, Rhodes said. Right now, only 13 to 15 percent of Growing Home's income comes from its produce, while grants supply the remainder.

Planting began on Honore Street in June in a 100-feet-by-30-feet hoop house: cucumbers, Malabar spinach, basil, tomatoes, and assorted greens were harvested for the first time in early July, Rhodes said. Planting for fall harvest will begin soon.

The hoop house will operate year-round; spinach is the main crop over the winter, along with some lettuce and carrots. An identical hoop house will be constructed this fall alongside it. Once the entire site is up and running, Rhodes expects a yield triple the 13,000 pounds grown in 2011 at Su Casa and Wood Street.

The extra capacity could also mean five more transitional jobs at Growing Home, where students learn not only urban agriculture methods but also marketing, retail sales, landscaping and customer service. Last year, there were 35 transitional jobs and this year there were 40, with 45 expected next year, Rhodes said.

Going into the 2012 farming season, Growing Home had 127 inquiries for 40 intern positions annually. The program is divided into two 14-week programs with roughly 20 interns each during the growing season. The Wood Street farm is used for training and the students rotate to the other farms. During the winter, the social enterprise concentrates on job development and recruiting.

The Honore Street site is preserved for Growing Home and Englewood by NeighborSpace, a non-profit land trust supported in part by a partnership of the City of Chicago, Chicago Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, which owns the land. NeighborSpace acquires sites as public-private land trusts, to be used by community groups as gardens and parks. This is its 79<sup>th</sup> community open space in the city, but its first urban farm.

"With an array of benefits, from job training and food security to neighborhood beautification and exercise, urban

farming is taking its place as a permanent part of the Chicago landscape," NeighborSpace Board President Alicia Berg said in prepared material during the farm's open house last October. "The Honore Street farm is an example of how, with sensible public-private partnerships, a great program like Growing Home can blossom."

Teamwork Englewood's Quality of Life plan includes not just urban agriculture and training facilities but food-related businesses, Rhodes said. "It could be produce markets, food carts, small restaurants, cafes – anything related to improving food access to the community." Since Growing Home helped establish the Greater Englewood Urban Agriculture Task Force in 2010, there are new community gardens and the new Kusanya Café, an espresso bar, at 69th and Morgan.

"The ultimate goal is to turn a food desert into a food destination," Rhodes said. "People are coming, there's more and more people who come to visit our sites as well as the community gardens every year. Change isn't something that happens overnight, but it is definitely happening."

One sign of this change, Rhodes said, is that sales at their farm stand have tripled since last year, thanks to the work of Sonya Harper, Growing Home's community outreach coordinator. Besides the farm stand, Harper runs "Wednesdays at Wood Street."

This event includes produce sales from the farm stand, tours of the farms, workshops and cooking demos. Twice yearly, Harper coordinates open houses in conjunction with surrounding organizations to teach the community about urban agriculture. The most recent event, held in June, was a workshop on healthy eating with chef Josephine McEntee of Emma's Kitchen. McEntee showed visitors various recipes on how to pair foods for taste and to cook vegetables just right so they wouldn't lose their nutrients.

Growing Home also received positive feedback on "Gardening for Beauty," a workshop where attendees used household items and different herbs to make shampoos, lotions and other beauty products. At the end of the open house, they were handed a free basket of produce. Last April Growing Home invited the Violence Interrupters, members of Ceasefire Englewood, an organization devoted to teaching people to mediate conflicts and stopping violence in their own community.

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## Gardening, community and connection

by Caitlin Isha Cousino

*Toledo Streets – Toledo, USA, 4/10/2014*

Urban homesteading and sustainability are two very popular buzzwords that beg serious consideration and dedicated application. The story of how I stumbled into this passion is rather long, scattered and potentially boring – some important notes being that I was obsessed with the Lorax, was fortunate enough to attend several well-run summer camps, and had a near-hyper-vigilant sense of ecological responsibility that I had no idea what to do with. As an adult, my primary passion manifested as a desire to attain a potent level of self-sustainability while educating and encouraging others to do the same.

After four years of directly applying myself to growing my own food, one of the greatest challenges I still experience to this day is cultivating patience and allowing nature to be my teacher. Pressures arise in my mind that say: "I'm too broke and under-educated. This time and energy spent trying to growing food could be spent making money to survive!" These voices are ever-present, and maybe they will stay that way. Yet, I always redirect my at-



The author, Caitlin Cousino, in the Toledo community garden she helps tend.

tention to how alive I am, how present I feel with my hands and feet in the soil and the smells of fresh vegetation – all while the sun beats on my face. In the long run, I am rewarded with a sense of accomplishment and self-resilience few activities in this life have ever provided for me, regardless of what my crop yield is.

Urban homesteading in the form of community gardening is integral to our emerging understanding of truly sustainable community. Most of us spend

so much of our time and energy invested in physically intangible concepts and activities, most often under the guise of making capital in a place we had no relationship to prior to employment, so that we can spend that capital on food we have no affinity to beyond basic survival.

Local community gardens become interpersonal relationship-building opportunities, as well as public forums for communication and problem-solving. A community can take pride in

## Chicago's blooming urban food movement

continued from page 8

A journalism graduate of the University of Missouri who worked in television and radio – NBC, FOX and CBS affiliates across the Midwest – Harper is originally from Englewood. She has a deep investment in the community, and it shows through her work. Her aim is not just to encourage residents to grow more produce to feed themselves, but to use the gardens and farms as a means to unite them more as a community.

"One of the biggest problems in this community is a lack of positive communication about community issues," she said. "There's no community center for anyone to visit." People stay indoors minding their own business, so nobody is aware of what goes on within the neighborhood, she said. Local gardens are a way of getting people outside and into each other's lives.

A block east of Wood Street and two blocks north, Growing Home owns land in the 5600 block of South Hermitage. Now the social enterprise leases it to the Hermitage Street Community Garden, where individuals pay \$25 for access to an 8-by-8-foot raised-bed plot, as well as seeds and soil. Cordia Pugh, volunteer community coordina-

tor of the garden, said subscribers may cultivate anything they want, including cabbage, collards, cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, flowers, string beans, mustard, turnip, greens and peppers. Each of the 38 plots can yield enough to feed a family of four for an entire year. Most of the produce is grown for owner consumption.

Pugh says public support is strong, what she estimates as 85 percent of the community and others from nearby Hyde Park. Recently, garden members held a workshop with Openlands about cultivating small plots, and planning what to grow.

Englewood was one of at least six neighborhoods in which Openlands did planning with churches, block clubs and individuals to preserve undeveloped land permanently.

"It helps property values to have a nice garden," Daniel said. "It makes the street safer because there are eyes and ears on the street."

Just as Growing Home provided input into the urban production farms part of the city ordinance, Openlands advised on the more recreational community gardens portion of the new city code.

The organization also helps individuals raise money for soil and plants, and it teaches a six-week course on how to form a group and assign tasks. The class meets at the Garfield Park Conservatory except for a final session on construction – raised beds, benches, pergolas – that is held at Dawson Technical Institute, a subsidiary of Kennedy King College in Englewood.

"That is Openlands's niche on urban agriculture, not the big gardens that sell to restaurants, but where people grow their own food that they share with each other," Daniel said. "They might have a little farm stand in the fall just to sell to neighbors," a provision that Openlands urged the city to allow. The organization has facilitated roughly 15 community gardens, some for food, others for flowers, she said.

Sonya Harper and her family, for example, garden privately through Openlands, Daniel said. So does Ernie Reynolds, 80, who lives at the Bethel Terrace senior center on 63rd Street. Openlands helped him obtain soil and lumber for raised beds. He and other seniors may have planted vegetables in this spring but been thwarted by the drought. They might plant lettuce for fall, she said.

knowing that the garden would never exist without their cumulative hard work, and reap the rewards of delicious produce to be shared. To me, the most rewarding aspects of community gardening have always been the unexpected friendships formed, and the new skills I acquire without setting out to learn anything in particular. Somehow these skills gleaned from gardening always find a way to translate into every other portion of my life, particularly in how I survey a given situation before I dive right into the thick of things.

If I could give anyone even considering backyard homesteading or community gardening advice that would have served me well, I would suggest that one be cautious, be patient, and be discerning. People will disappoint you, nature will surprise you, and you will make mistakes. If you weren't schooled with this knowledge early on, getting into a rhythm and ease of practice will take time and patience. It would be wise to try out several gardening partners, learn several gardening styles, learn your soil quality and always remember that, no matter how seasoned you are, nature will always astonish you with both blessings and misfortunes.

Gardens open to the public bring many benefits, according to Bea Jasper of the Greater Englewood Gardening Association, which was started by Openlands and Growing Home. "People are developing gardens to beautify the community, to lower the idea that this is a blighted area," she said.

Holding meetings on every second Saturday of the month, the Greater Englewood Gardening Association teaches how to build raised beds, how to do flower arrangements and how to cultivate vegetables. Its meetings attract up to 30 people at a time, Jasper said. The association provided the manpower for the Bethel Gardens; members set up raised beds and spread wood chips.

"Gardens are there to give people on our block a sense of pride," Jasper added. "Gardening especially helps the youth, giving young people something to do instead of standing around. Gardening will teach them a sense of responsibility. It has a way of lowering stress and bringing up pride in the community."

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / *Street-Wise – USA*



## Art from addiction

by Rosette Royale

*Real Change – Seattle, USA, 4/21/2014*

Earlier this fall, Seattle painter and muralist Ryan Henry Ward got a visit from the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata.

Because Zapata died almost a hundred years ago, Ward knows that might sound implausible. Even if he were alive, how would Zapata have known to find Ward in Ballard, in a small artist studio tucked inside a cavernous industrial warehouse?

But Ward, 38, had just finished a painting of Zapata, portraying him with his handlebar mustache and oversized sombrero, when the revolutionary came to Ward in a vision. Zapata acknowledged gratitude at being the subject of a portrait. Then, in a flash – he disappeared.

Ward, whose magically surreal murals can be found throughout North Seattle, said he felt blessed by the experience. Many people, he suggested, have been conditioned to believe visitations by the deceased are preposterous or that otherworldly realms are unreal. Seated on a secondhand couch in his unheated studio, his dog Merlin curled up nearby, Ward conceded that Zapata's visit might have been a figment of his mind.

“Or maybe it really happened,” he said.

Lately, there have been a lot of visitors to Ward's studio. The Mexican painter Frida Kahlo stopped by. Henry David Thoreau showed up; the American tax resistor who extolled a simple life close to nature in his book, *Walden*. So, too, Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and Mohandas Gandhi, the Indian leader known for his practice of nonviolent disobedience. Even Ward's deceased brother, Brandon, made an appearance.

Portraits of all of these people were included in Ward's upcoming solo exhibition, “Working Class Hero.” Ward will display 100 paintings, comprised of portraits and other work. While the exhibit incorporates social justice pioneers, some of the paintings portray fictional characters, such as Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit* and Spock, the half-Vulcan, half-human officer on “Star Trek.”

It doesn't bother Ward that the exhibit places portraits of real people alongside those of imaginary creatures, like a smiling Sasquatch. After all, he wants to create work young people will enjoy, he said. The belief that art should speak to young people infuses the spirit of Ward's colorful murals, which he signs with his middle name, “henry.” In the past five years, he estimates he's painted



Ryan Henry Ward's painting of Frida Kahlo includes a self-portrait; Kahlo is holding the head of Ryan Henry Ward. Photo of Ryan Ward's painting by Alex Garland

150 murals around Seattle.

He said he also wants his art to convey a message: “To maybe help people that are wealthy in Seattle understand how their actions impact someone in poverty in Calcutta.” The Indian metropolis is home to the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Center; a portrait of Mother Teresa is featured in the upcoming show.

As for the exhibit's title, “Working Class Hero,” it comes from a song by John Lennon, which Ward played for inspiration, listening to it on repeat for hours. (Yes, there will be a portrait of Lennon, too.) The lyrics, punctuated by the minor-chord lament of an acoustic guitar, speak of the struggle of staying true to working-class roots:

*When they've tortured and scared  
you for 20-odd years/  
Then they expect you to pick a  
career/  
When you can't really function  
you're so full of fear/  
A working class hero is something  
to be.*

Working on the exhibition has produced a time machine of sorts for Ward, merging his past with his present.

“I'm revisiting a lot of experiences from my life,” Ward said.

**O, brothers,  
where art  
thou?**

Ward grew up outside of Bozeman, Montana, the middle child of three boys. His dad worked as a welder and his mom pulled shifts as a waitress. His family lived a simple life.

Around the time he was 10, the family relocated to Washington, living in multiple cities. Ward and his older brother, Brandon, played in a band called Green Mountain Boys.

Ofentimes, Brandon wrote lyrics and took care of lead vocals, but once, another band mate sang Lennon's “Working Class Hero.”

“It's kind of left this impression in my mind ever since,” Ward said.

Brandon, too, was leaving an impression on Ward. Separated in age by 18 months, the pair lived together in Bellingham, where Ward attended Fairhaven College. Brandon became Ward's unofficial art teacher, instructing him in color theory and composition in painting. The brothers grew close.

Ward said that Brandon was a musician and painter who, while working on farms or construction sites, wanted to raise the consciousness of humanity. Then Brandon shifted his direction somewhat and attended massage school to achieve a new goal: “He wanted to heal people.”

Doctors, unfortunately, could not heal Brandon. He had a heart disease, one that caused his aorta to continually enlarge as he grew older. In 1999, at the age of 25, Brandon died of a heart attack.

Ward was devastated.

Ward's younger brother, Andy, also

lived with him. A year after Brandon's death, Ward and Andy ventured to Thailand, Nepal, and India. They visited Calcutta and volunteered at the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Center. After four months, Ward and his younger brother came home. Then Ward took another solo trip overseas, this time to Southern Africa and Southeast Asia.

Back in Washington, Ward began a career in social work. He served as a recreational therapist for children with psychological and emotional disorders, using art therapy. When that position ended, he worked in an AIDS hospice, a job he loved. When that job didn't pay the rent, he became a care provider for developmentally disabled people.

“Then I got burned out,” Ward said.

He started a landscape and construction business with Andy, building retaining walls and installing sprinkler systems. The work paid well, so when Andy bought a four-wheeler, Ward emulated him and purchased his own. But whereas his brother's vehicle was small and lightweight, Ward bought the biggest four-wheeler on the market. It weighed almost half a ton.

Four-wheeling became a form of recreation. One evening in February 2007, in the sand dunes near Moses Lake, Andy and some friends took a night ride in their four-wheelers. Ward joined in.

The five of them raced over dunes that dipped and dived for 3,000 acres. Ward knew his brother and his friends' lighter vehicles were swift, so he pushed his heavier vehicle to keep up. The others surged into the night. Unable to see well in the darkness, Ward steered his four-wheeler in the direction of their taillights – and careened over a cliff.

Ward sailed over the handlebars. He crashed into the sand below. The four-wheeler landed on his back. The vehicle's roll-bar struck his helmet. His head ricocheted inside. He lay pinned under nearly a half-ton of rubber and metal.

As he watched four pairs of taillights head off in the distance, Ward screamed for help. The other four-wheelers sped on. He screamed louder. The taillights became faint. Finally, they disappeared.

Ward yelled into the night. Five minutes passed. Ten minutes. Fifteen. Then it struck him:

“I realized they weren't coming back.”

**Lost and found**

Ward struggled beneath the four-wheeler, but he couldn't move. He didn't

ADDICTION, page 14

## From homelessness to a night at the Oscars

by Rosette Royale

*Real Change – Seattle, USA, 4/21/2014*

As a homeless teen, Inocente dreamed of a better life. But she never imagined her dreams would lead to the Oscars.

She lived in San Diego with her mother and three younger brothers, and for years they bounced from the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) to friends' houses, from the Salvation Army to short-lived apartment stays. Sometimes Inocente and her family, who were all undocumented immigrants from Mexico, slept in a park. Over the course of nine years, they never stayed in the same place for more than three months.

Through it all, Inocente, who goes only by her first name, held on to one particular dream: being an artist. Her chosen medium was painting, and she favored bright colors. She swirled, dabbed and dribbled paint on any surface she could find. Often, she painted on her face, creating detailed flowers on her temple or swirling arabesques on her cheek. Art brought her joy.

“If people knew my story, they'd probably think I should be painting dark, like dark paintings,” Inocente said.

People around the United States got the chance to witness part of her story in 2012, after the MTV premiere of the short documentary, *Inocente*. The 40-minute film follows the homeless teen as she turns the events of her life into art. Her artistic passions play out against revelations of why she feels responsible for her family's homelessness; they also serve as a joyous counterpoint to Inocente's strained relationship with her mother, Carmela.

In February, *Inocente* won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short. It became the first film financed in part by Kickstarter, a crowd-funding site, to win an Oscar.

The Oscar win changed Inocente's life. She had always dreamed of traveling, and, thanks to the film, she was able to travel the U.S. to advocate for homeless youth and arts education for young people.

Inocente will come to Seattle on September 27 for a series of art-centered events. First, she will participate in an art workshop for young people 12 and older at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). After a short break, there will be a screening of the film, followed by a question-and-answer session. The event is sponsored by Seattle University, in partnership with SAM and Sanctuary



The film, *Inocente*, shows Inocente as she prepares for an exhibit at a San Diego nonprofit that uses art to create positive transformations for young people facing adversity. Inocente created 30 pieces of work for the show. Her artwork raised \$12,000. She says that each painting is “a story.” Photo by Sean Fine

Arts Center, a nonprofit serving homeless youth in Seattle's University District.

In an interview with *Real Change*, Inocente, now 19, said that while she enjoys working with young artists during her travels, she can't watch the film anymore: it's too painful.

Besides, many things have changed in her life since 2009, when she met filmmakers Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine. The husband-and-wife team had sought a young, homeless artist who would tell her story on film.

Looking back on the experience, Inocente said she didn't mind being followed by cameras for almost 18 months. She'd grown used to people looking at her because of her painted face. Besides, she feels the movie isn't about her.

“It puts a face to poor people, to homelessness, immigration and arts education,” said Inocente.

But the face that helps viewers connect with those issues belongs to Inocente. It's her story that draws viewers into a young artist's unflinching commitment to realize her dream. And it began in Mexico.

**Across the border**

Inocente doesn't remember entering the United States.

She was born in a small town in Mexico and lived there with her mother, father and three younger brothers, the youngest an infant. One day, Inocente said, her father had her put on her coat, then sneaked her and two brothers across the border into California. He never asked permission from her mother.

“We were basically kidnapped,” she said.

Inocente was five.

Soon after, her father promised her mother he'd return for her and the youngest son. But weeks passed, and he never went back to Mexico. So Carmela bundled up the child and crossed the border. The family reunited.

The reunion produced little joy. Inocente said that in Mexico, her father had been abusive, a behavior that continued in the U.S. One evening, Inocente's father told her to tell her mother he wanted dinner. But Inocente, playing with her toys, forgot. When her father realized she hadn't followed his orders, Inocente said he beat her. Carmela stepped in to protect the child.

“Then all hell broke loose,” Inocente said.

Her father began beating her mother. Her mother called the police. Her father broke the phone on her mother's head. Cops arrested her father. Inocente, her mother and brothers were taken to a shelter.

And her father?

“He got deported,” Inocente said.

Since Carmela was undocumented, she couldn't work legally. Having little money made it tough to pay for an apartment. With no place to live, the family began what Inocente calls “their journey into homelessness.” Some nights, when Inocente and her brothers slept outside, Carmela stayed awake so no one would bother the family.

In the film, the 15-year-old Inocente

admits she feels responsible for her family's plight: after all, if she had remembered to tell her mother to fix dinner, there might not have been a fight. If there hadn't been a fight, her father wouldn't have been deported, and the family wouldn't have gone to a shelter. Nothing, she says in the movie, would change her feelings.

The young artist came to learn that the passage of time can shift a fixed perspective.

Inocente is now 19, and she said that, as she's grown up, “I realized it wasn't my fault.”

**Like daughter, like mother**

Perhaps Inocente inherited her propensity to dream from her mother.

In the film, Carmela, speaking Spanish, says that she imagined the U.S. was a paradise, a place with no dirt, only grass and flowers. She dreamed that her children would have a place to live, so they could say, “Esta es mi casa.”

This is my home.

Instead, they lived in shelters or on the streets. Feeling she had failed her children, Carmela admits that once, when Inocente was 11, she took her daughter to a bridge. She told her they would both jump into the sea. Inocente begged her not to. She pulled her mother back.

“Ella me dejó,” Carmela says. “She stopped me.”

Carmela wanted to tell Inocente she loved her, that she would never harm her. But because of the suicide attempt, Carmela believed her daughter hated her. And in the film, the tension in their relationship comes into focus.

At one point, Inocente became involved in a San Diego-based nonprofit called A Reason to Survive (ARTS), which uses art to create positive transformation for young people facing adversity. ARTS staff members selected her to create a solo show of 30 works. The family was living illegally in a garage, and Inocente and her mother got into a fight. On the eve of the show, Inocente told her mother she wanted to move into a group home for teens. But there was a hitch: she needed her mother's permission.

Carmela refused.

A representative from ARTS contacted a lawyer to mediate. On camera,

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## A humanistic portrait

by Al Griffin

**Curbside Chronicle – Oklahoma City, OK, USA, 11/04/2013**

In 1975, I became interested in the day-to-day life of men and women living on the streets. Their existence seemed so different, their struggles and victories so foreign to the offices and houses, the commutes and coffee breaks, the dinner parties and Little League games of other people. I read newspaper accounts about the plight of the homeless in America, but these articles offered me nothing except statistics. I yearned for something more. I wanted a more humanistic portrait of the homeless.

In the early 90s, in Atlanta, I began going out in the morning to meet people living on the street. Sitting down on a curb or a park bench, I introduced myself, shook hands, and asked these men and women how they were doing. I found that despite their need for money and food, what they needed more than anything was simple, human contact. At the core of our interaction was a desire to be recognized as an equal, with a mind and a spirit.

I got to know them through their stories and their histories of travel and labor. I began to photograph the men and women I met and paid them a small fee for modeling. Although I do regular street photography, I never “stole” images of the people I photographed. I visited with them first and treated the shoot just like any portrait sitting. Afterwards, I made 5x7 prints of the photos for them to keep.

I fell in love with the experience and



Clockwise from upper left, Alfonso, Jim, and Art. Photos by Al Griffin

have since photographed people living on the streets in Atlanta, Washington, D.C., New York City, Seattle, Vancouver, Chicago, and San Francisco. Recently, I created a portrait series of men living on the streets of Oklahoma City. Their faces reflect experience and wisdom, pain and suffering, joy and triumph.

We ask ourselves, “What can we do for the homeless?”

My answer is simple: allow yourself to see them. They are not invisible. Begin with a smile, a handshake, and a few minutes of conversation. These simple actions lay the foundation for equality. We are a country of people who are perhaps one paycheck away from being



without a house, without healthcare, or without transportation. When we open our eyes, we can see that, as people, we really are no different. Only our circumstances differ.

### Alfonso

Born near Mexico City, Alfonso followed migrant agricultural work from the Pacific Northwest to the South. As age and health concerns slowed his ability to earn money, Alfonso found himself living on the streets of Oklahoma City.

Alfonso maintains a strong sense of faith and finds joy in life despite rough circumstances. He is gifted with an ability to find deep meaning in life's simplicities and tells lively stories con-

cerning his past experiences.

cerning his past experiences. Alfonso speaks lovingly of his childhood homeland, but recognizes that Mexico has changed over the years and he is happy to be living in Oklahoma City (OKC). He recently asked me to photograph him with his shopping cart and possessions. He said that, when he gets off the street, he wants to have a way to always remember this moment in life.

And even though this will sound harsh, this is called ego. Our ego needs to know that if we are to see the results

### Art

I met Art on Film Row in OKC. Our first handshake brought forth a quick smile, immediately revealing his cheerful disposition. An extremely affable fellow, I've watched Art give advice to strangers as they puzzle the complexities of new parking meters downtown and offer directions to visitors lost on the sidewalk. Art has taught me that circumstances in life do not have to control our attitude.

### Jim

I first encountered Jim busking at the corner of Walker and 3rd. He was playing his wooden flute, waiting for people to pass by and drop spare change into his hat. I soon found out that, in addition to being a musician, Jim is also an enthusiastic conversationalist. His hands never stop moving as he recounts his lengthy history of jobs all across America. While Jim speaks hesitantly of the darker chapters of his life, his face lights up when he recounts his days of steady work and an old companion in a far-off town.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Curbside Chronicle – USA**

of our efforts, we want them to be a success. After all, we took time out from work. We spent our weekend. Our money went into this project. And it is natural, I guess, to want to see the fruits of our labor. But sometimes what we think is our right to expect is, in the end, our ego. I think it is harder to help someone who you just might end up building a relationship with. Because then you see their flaws, and they see yours. You realize that some of what put them in the situation they are in was of their own doing, and in our mind, that is something they just need to muster up some willpower and change. Someone in a foreign country – why, you could not even understand anything other than a very basic conversation, so getting to know both the halo and the horns they wear was not even possible.

Now, you may be reading this and getting angry at what you think is my ego. How dare I assume your motivation for

HELPING, page 13

## In the shelter of animals

by Aaron Burkhalter

**Real Change – Seattle, 1/13/2014**

Everywhere she goes, Jennifer McSherry carries a beige pet carrier. Inside, McSherry's tuxedo cat, Bella, goes along for the ride.

McSherry, 48, and her fiancé, Derek Hutchinson, 40, were forced to leave their Kent apartment in the spring, when the rent went up \$50. Bringing Bella with them, they slept in the alley behind Queen Anne Liquor and Wine, under the Ballard Bridge and, most recently, in the Roy Street Shelter in Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood.

Outreach workers met McSherry and Hutchinson under the Ballard Bridge and offered them space at the shelter.

The couple agreed, under one condition: “If you take one of us, you've got to take us all,” McSherry said. “And that includes Bella.”

On a recent Tuesday morning, McSherry sold copies of Real Change at Northwest Market Street and 22nd Avenue Northwest in Ballard while Bella, secure in her harness, nuzzled into a pile of blue blankets. Some customers petted Bella, but McSherry said many passersby criticized her for keeping the cat while being homeless.

Once, a woman offered to adopt Bella from McSherry and bring her indoors. McSherry refused the woman's offer of money. She couldn't put a price on her cat.

“She's our baby,” McSherry said. “She means everything to us.”

McSherry said she puts Bella before



**Forced to leave their apartment, Jennifer McSherry, her fiancé Derek Hutchinson and their cat, Bella, lived behind a Queen Anne liquor store. Now they live in the Roy Street Shelter.**

everything else. In return, she gets unconditional love and inspiration.

“She's our reason for getting up in the morning and selling the papers,” she said.

Unique relationships

Leslie Irvine, a University of Colorado sociology professor and author of “My Dog Always Eats First: Homeless People and Their Animals,” said animals provide a unique relationship for homeless people, who are often ignored by society.

“To feel loved and needed by another being just the way you are really goes a long way when you're in a situation

when society has completely devalued you,” Irvine said.

When she started her research, Irvine assumed that the animals went hungry, but found that homeless people didn't need the help she offered.

“They had more food than they could carry,” Irvine said. “I thought I was going to be this big hero and give out this pet food, but they already had plenty.”

She discovered that in many cases, homeless people are more attentive to their pets.

“Having a home doesn't necessarily mean you're a good animal caretaker,” Irvine said.

Housed dogs often sit for hours at home by themselves. Homeless people have their pets with them all day.

“They get 24-7 attention, exercise and fresh air,” Irvine said.

### Visible animals

Kara Main-Hester, spokesperson for The Seattle Animal Shelter, said the organization often gets calls from people worried by the sight of an animal with a homeless person. The Seattle Animal Shelter sends officers to check on every call, she said, but often finds the animals are as well-cared for as those that live in homes.

It's just that they're out in the open.

“When individuals are homeless, they are much more visible with their animals,” she said. “A dog in a backyard with a fence is harder to see.”

McSherry said she and Hutchinson al-

ways have bags of cat food nearby, and keep Bella's carrier lined with blankets to keep her warm. Friends and Real Change customers help them provide for her.

“She constantly has a bowl of food,” she said.

McSherry has been homeless before, and said she spent most of her time sitting in a library. But this time, with Bella, she's motivated to sell papers and find housing.

“She gives us a reason to keep going and trying,” McSherry said. “She's the reason that we bother anymore, that we stay away from drugs. She's the reason we stay sober.”

Lakesha Johnson, 37, said she had the same experience when she was homeless with Roxy, a Jack Russell Terrier. Johnson volunteers at the Doney Memorial Pet Clinic, a veterinary clinic at Seattle's Union Gospel Mission for homeless and low-income people.

She was homeless in 2008 and trying to kick a heroin habit. She credits Roxy for helping her get sober.

“When homeless people get pets, it shows them they really got something to live for,” Johnson said.

Roxy, she said, could tell when she was on drugs.

“They know the difference,” Johnson said, “because they know the real you.”

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Real Change – USA**

## Volunteering at home takes real courage

by Laurie Green

**The Contributor – Nashville, USA, 4/01/2014**

*“It is often easier to become outraged by injustice half a world away than by oppression and discrimination half a block from home.”*

– Carl T. Rowan, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist

Perhaps you know you are dipping your toe into rough waters when you put a disclaimer at the beginning. But I feel the need to do so. I do try very hard to be a follower of Christ's teachings. I know that there is no difference in how our Creator sees me and someone in a faraway land, whose native tongue I could not understand. I know that if one believes at all in the sanctity of life, then that reverence must be given to all with an indifference to race, creed or nationality.

I know that and I believe that. Yet I also

question in my heart something that has bothered me for many years. Not being a regular attendee of any church, I do not keep up with the various missions conducted by all of the congregations here in Nashville. So when my mother mentioned that her church was sending a team over to a foreign country to help build a school, I replied that they could save a lot of fundraising time and send that same team to some of the areas I am in daily. Areas just a few miles away, where the poverty is overwhelming. We have schools just a few blocks away from our offices, where the playground equipment is not even safe to play on. Where the students need help just making sure they have food to eat daily. We have senior citizens who sit in the den of their tiny apartment... they never see a soul until they venture out to the food bank. And they are dying from loneliness. We have thousands of our brothers and sisters who are homeless, who could use a team you put together to host an evening of food and fellowship. Or some folks to fill up

their new apartment with enough to turn it into a home.

So why do so many feel that to conduct a mission trip they must leave their state or their country, when so many just a few miles down the road need them so much? Is it easier to never know how the story will end? When you leave your mission and travel hundreds, even thousands of miles back home you will always think that the results of your efforts were a success. The ending is wrapped up and the bow is tied tight. I know some who have volunteered with Southern Alliance for People and Animal Welfare. SAFPAW have gotten angry when someone we helped last year is back in the same situation. They felt their time was wasted. When they discovered that their efforts did not have a happy-ever-after ending, they were not happy.

And even though this will sound harsh, this is called ego. Our ego needs to know that if we are to see the results

of our efforts, we want them to be a success. After all, we took time out from work. We spent our weekend. Our money went into this project. And it is natural, I guess, to want to see the fruits of our labor. But sometimes what we think is our right to expect is, in the end, our ego. I think it is harder to help someone who you just might end up building a relationship with. Because then you see their flaws, and they see yours. You realize that some of what put them in the situation they are in was of their own doing, and in our mind, that is something they just need to muster up some willpower and change. Someone in a foreign country – why, you could not even understand anything other than a very basic conversation, so getting to know both the halo and the horns they wear was not even possible.

Now, you may be reading this and getting angry at what you think is my ego. How dare I assume your motivation for

## Helping at home is messy and the destination is not exotic

continued from page 12

going to that foreign country for a mission trip? You are right; I don't know your inner thoughts. And perhaps in the end, it is that we helped at all that really matters.

But I do hurt when I see civic groups and churches head off somewhere far away when I know of so many here in our town who need them. And all that I have said, I have said because it has been my journey to where I am now. My ego once got angry when the fruits of my labor did not grow and show off all that I had done. I admit it. But the God I follow was patient with me, and made me realize that the journey's end for that person was up to them, not me. All I was asked to do was plant seeds. Water them a bit. The growing part was up to a power a whole lot greater than me, and it was not for me to worry

about. And while I am sometimes asked to pick them up once more, I am also asked not to keep score. And that is hard for us humans to do; scorekeeping is a national pastime.

Helping close to home is messy, and the destination is not exotic. Heck, you pass the area every day on your way to your office. There is risk in the actual building of what may become a relationship, because in knowing who you are helping, the flaws and warts you both have will eventually be seen. They might see that the person helping them has no rags-to-riches story to tell, and you might have to get past what you feel are behaviors they could put aside, if they wanted to badly enough. Then, as time goes on, you get past that stage and you see only a human being before you. Both of you do. You see faults, and you see tragedies. You begin to see strengths in each other; you had already

zeroed in on the weaknesses. And your ego gets put away and all you begin to focus on is that you want better for this person you are helping.

I also suspect the ending paragraph you think you will read. I won't make it that easy. Recently, someone I spent years trying to help fell all the way to the bottom. Someone I shed countless tears worrying about. They ended up in prison for a cruel and stupid crime. Forget fruits of my labor. For now it would seem that my efforts were in vain. But helping someone is never in vain; the pain comes when you can't ignore that the ending you wanted was replaced by a selfish crime.

In putting this out there for all to see, I do not want anyone to feel that the effort is not worth it. I certainly don't feel that way, not anymore. The effort is worth it. It is making up the ending you

want, rather than accepting that not all endings will be as you want, that is the fatal flaw that will send you back home and wanting something tidier. But what my Creator has finally gotten through to my head is to accept all journeys as having endings I have no right to call. Until then, it is never over, and what appears as a failure may instead be a slow victory. And maybe I won't even know when the victory is awarded to this person. But until the last person in my own backyard is fed, is housed, or is no longer lonely, I will not get on that plane.

*Laurie Green is the founder and director of Southern Alliance For People & Animal Welfare, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.*

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **The Contributor** – USA



# Artist’s journey of recovery from addiction

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experience any physical pain from the vehicle on top of him. Or if he did, his mind couldn't process it. But he could feel the vehicle pushing him deeper into the sand.

His breathing grew labored. Each inhale became shorter. Ward felt his life being crushed out of him. And he could smell gasoline.

Ward went into panic mode. His mind focused on an unbelievable thought: “Oh, my God, I’m gonna die under here.”

As if he were viewing a cinematic montage, Ward saw his life pass before him. It struck him as funny that he’d spent so much time worrying about life, when, suddenly so close to death, he realized none of the worrying mattered.

“I had this cosmic opening,” he said. “I saw the [celestial] spheres and the cosmic universe.”

Ward gave in. He accepted his own imminent death.

“Then this 16-year-old kid jumped out of a pickup and threw the four-wheeler off of me,” he said.

The teen had been driving in the dunes. He was so skinny, Ward couldn't figure out how he lifted the four-wheeler. Possibly an adrenaline rush. But Ward was

free. Soon after, Ward’s brother and his friends arrived. Ward had been trapped for 30 minutes.

Even though he could stand and walk, he knew he’d suffered severe injuries. He considered going to the emergency room, but ruled it out. “I didn’t have health insurance and didn’t think I could afford to go,” he said.

Instead, he recuperated at home. He suffered from amnesia. Excruciating back pain relegated him to bed rest, he said, so he contacted friends to acquire painkillers. Since Ward couldn't sit or stand for long periods, he was unable to hold down a job. All he could do was lie in bed, where he found that even with the pain, he could paint.

“It was the only thing I could think of doing that could make money,” he said.

Six months after the accident, he sought medical attention. X-rays and MRIs revealed the four-wheeler had crushed a disc between two lumbar vertebrae while injuring other discs. But his body had been healing.

Soon after the test results, he felt strong enough to work and, living outside Seattle, he got another care provider job. He took his young client swimming one day and jumped in the pool with him. The impact of hitting the water reinjured Ward’s back.

Because the injury happened on the job,

Labor & Industries, the state’s workplace safety organization, covered his health care. To combat the pain of the injury, a doctor wrote Ward a prescription: 60 milligrams of morphine a day.

“When I was on it, it was fine,” Ward said.

But while the pain persisted, the prescription ran out. When Ward asked for refills, his doctor advised him to wean himself from pills. He couldn’t. Instead, he bought painkillers off the street.

During this time, Ward pursued his artwork. He got his first show at The Orange Spot, a now-defunct art gallery in Ballard. He bought a Chevy truck for \$400, and a friend gave him a camper. He hauled the camper near Gasworks Park and lived inside. He started dumpster-diving and fixed communal meals in the park.

“Once I moved into the neighborhood,” he said, “people were knocking on my camper door wanting to get to know me, wanting me to be part of that community.”

After the show, he struck a deal with The Orange Spot owner, who priced Ward’s pieces under \$100. For more than a year, the gallery sold his artwork, sometimes three pieces a week. Ward earned enough to buy art supplies and dog food for Merlin.

When the recession shuttered the gallery, Ward struck another deal, this time with the owner of the Triangle Lounge: Ward would paint over the graffiti-covered exterior in exchange for free food. He got other mural gigs by knocking on doors.

“I think I did 26 murals before I got paid,” he said.

All the while, he was still addicted to painkillers. The truck and camper got towed. He couldn’t afford to pay the tickets and tow fee, so he stayed with his parents for a while. Then he saved enough to buy a van. Unable to afford to buy more drugs on the street, he sold the van for heroin. He lived out of his backpack: “In my mind I’d rationalized it all as romantic,” he said.

As he gained attention for murals populated with unicorns and mermaids and gnomes and crows, Ward battled addiction and slept in parks. Once, to look presentable for a TV interview, he bought a pair of pants at Fred Meyer. The next day he returned them for the cash because he needed the money.

The murals and artwork earned him money – not a lot, but enough – and he was able to rent a West Seattle apartment. And he achieved a goal: he

kicked his heroin habit. Now, he’s been sober 20 months.

“It’s been quite a journey,” Ward said.

## The shining

Back in his Ballard art studio, Ward perched on the lip of a couch. Jugs of acrylic paint covered a nearby table, and an empty easel stood under a bright light. It was while painting canvases on the easel that he received visits from Zapata and some of the other subjects in “Working Class Hero.” The visitation that most affected him occurred with his deceased brother, Brandon.

“I spent the whole day bawling my head off,” Ward said.

Along with providing access to other realms, art, Ward said, can bring people together. He’ll put this second belief to practice later this month, when he opens a space in the Greenwood Collective that he’ll call the Quadrupus Gallery. The gallery will showcase an artist from another city, say Milwaukee, in exchange for a Seattle artist showing work in the companion city.

As for the term Quadrupus, it’s a name Ward bestowed on a being he created and painted on the side of his van.

“It’s like an octopus, but with four legs,” he said.

Recently, Ward gave up his West Seattle apartment. Like Thoreau, one of his heroes, Ward wanted a simpler life. Now he lives in the van and sleeps inside on a Tempur-Pedic mattress. He manages his back pain through walking and meditation.

Two weeks before “Working Class Hero” was scheduled to open, Ward still had more portraits to complete. He trusted his intuition would guide him to future subjects. Whether they’re imaginary or real doesn’t matter to him.

What is more important, Ward said, is the sense of gratitude he feels when people and beings come to him during the artistic process. The subjects express themselves through his paintbrush, so when he does a portrait of Gandhi, his benevolent nature permeates the portrait. He said he wants people to experience the nature of Gandhi or Lennon or Spock or Zapata when they see the painting.

“If the spirit of that person didn’t shine through to me,” Ward said, “how can it shine through to the audience?”

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Real Change** – USA

# Summer schools focus on racism

continued from page 4

ted of murder. (The suspect in Martin’s slaying, George Zimmerman, was also acquitted of manslaughter.)

Discussing the deaths of Till and Martin, Lee-Butler said, caused him to think a lot about how his racial makeup could make him a target of violence.

“What can you do in this world of Trayvon Martin?” Lee-Butler asked. “What can you do not to be an enemy?”

Andrea Lopez, who participated in Freedom School and is Mexican-American, offered a solution: make attending Freedom School a requirement. “Even for police,” Lopez, 19, added.

Lee-Butler said that at Freedom School, he and Lopez, who are dating, both learned to conquer their fear of public speaking. At the event at City Hall, under the gaze of council members Mike O’Brien, Nick Licata and Sally Bagshaw, and city attorney Pete Holmes, Lee-Butler spoke about the importance of education for young people of mixed race, while Lopez talked about the struggles poor people face paying for college.

“How are we supposed to provide for ourselves and get out of the poverty cycle?” she asked the crowd of nearly 70 people.

## Child psychiatrists in short supply

continued from page 3

AACAP has found a shortage of providers in every state.

Even Massachusetts, which has the highest per-capita ratio of child and adolescent psychiatrists, falls short of meeting the need in many communities, said Stuart Goldman, senior associate in psychiatry and co-director of the Mood Disorder Program at Boston Children’s Hospital.

That shortage is compounded by an unequal distribution along socioeconomic lines, with the majority of child and adolescent psychiatrists practicing in affluent communities, Goldman said.

While many wealthy neighborhoods of Boston have an abundance of private-practice and outpatient hospital physicians, areas like South Boston, Dorchester, and Roxbury do not have many local providers.

“One of the issues is that kids who are living in poverty have higher mental health problem rates,” said Goldman. “Just the problem of being poor is a challenge, but they also live in communities with lower property taxes and lower housing costs, which typically

## From Mississippi to Seattle’s Central District

Empowering people sits at the core of freedom schools – programs often associated with the civil rights movement. In 1963, when most black Southerners were denied the right to vote, many schools in the south remained segregated. Shortly after that year’s March on Washington when Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his, “I Have a Dream” speech, activist Charles Cobb proposed running free, alternative schools for the black residents of Mississippi.

The following summer, often referred to as “Freedom Summer,” Mississippi was the site of more than 40 freedom schools, held in churches and on back porches. Volunteer teachers focused on literacy, academic skills and black history, and they empowered students to become socially active in their communities. Older students, some of whom were in their 70s and 80s, were encouraged to vote. At the time, freedom school organizers estimated that more than 3,500 people attended.

One tenet of 60s-era freedom schools was finding the power in personal stories, an aspect that carried over to the programs Lopez and Lee-Butler attended this summer. On the workshop’s fifth day, attendees participated in a

session called “Know Your Rights with the Police.”

For 90 minutes, three group members instructed other attendees on what to say and how to interact with a police officer during a stop. Group members paired up to take part in a role play, one impersonating an officer, the other a civilian. Throughout the session, students recalled their interactions with police.

But some stories came later.

Days after freedom school ended, Lee-Butler and Lopez both recalled a police run-in last year in the Central District.

The couple had a tiff while in a car, Lopez said, so she stepped out to cool off. As she walked down the street, Lee-Butler drove next to her, then stopped the car and got out to talk, she said. He hugged her.

“Then four cops pulled up, and they pulled her away,” Lee-Butler said.

Lopez said she and Lee-Butler hadn’t been yelling or physically fighting, but an officer asked if her boyfriend had struck her. She told him no.

Lee-Butler said that an officer asked him about the nature of his relationship with Lopez and if there had been violence. He said he told the officer he

and Lopez were a couple and there had not been an altercation.

Both said police continued to question them, as well as another friend who was in the car. Lopez said she continued to tell the officer she and Lee-Butler were only talking. Eventually, all four officers left.

Lopez said remembering that incident still makes her angry. She felt as if the police treated her, Lee-Butler and their friend unfairly because they were all people of color.

When it happened, she said she answered every question the officer asked. She said that because of Freedom School, she now knows she can ask an officer if she’s being detained and she can tell him she has the right to remain silent.

Lopez said Freedom School taught her more than she imagined: “Now I know I can stand up for myself.”

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Real Change** – USA

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“We all started with the best intentions, but it becomes very difficult to practice psychiatry the way you know you should practice psychiatry when you are so crammed with patients.”

Many doctors who start out in a clinic setting quickly become overwhelmed by the heavy caseload, Shatkin said.

As part of his residency training, Shatkin worked in an Arkansas clinic where he says he routinely saw 15 patients a day, 10 new patients a week, and still had a six-month waiting list.

practice psychiatry the way you know you should practice psychiatry when you are so crammed with patients,” he explained.

In the end, many practitioners opt to leave the clinic setting. Instead, they open up private practices where patients can afford to pay service-based fees.

“While we want to be a society that protects and cares for the least fortunate . . . in tough budget times, the services for indigent care and for child care suffer,” Goldman said.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / **Spare Change News** - USA



## Journalist Alan Weisman discusses overpopulation

continued from page 5

on the planet was limited to relatively few plants that had roots which could fix nitrogen: beans, legumes. Artificial nitrogen fertilizer just blew the lid off what nature does. All this extra plant life suddenly could grow, and we used it to feed ourselves. And three relatively rare weeds in prehistory – wheat, corn, rice – were proliferating.

The next step was in the 1960s, with what we call the Green Revolution, which was the result of crossbreeding plants: we weren't inserting genes, but we were selecting plants for their genetic qualities. Among the qualities was shorter plants, so they'd be putting more energy into grain rather than long stalk. Dwarf wheat varieties suddenly changed the world, and it was rather opportune because by then, our population on the planet had risen to a little under half of what it is today. And even then, people were starting to get very, very nervous.

There's a famous book that came out in 1968 written by Paul and Anne Ehrlich called *The Population Bomb*. In the preface, they said that we've reached the point that, unless there's an agricultural miracle, we're going to have widespread famine in the 1970s. Well, lo and behold, there was this agricultural miracle. Today, a lot of economists like to say that the Green Revolution disproved the Ehrlichs and disproved the economist Thomas Robert Malthus who, coincidentally in 1798 – the same year that Jenner invented the small-pox vaccine – postulated that because population grows exponentially [and] crop production grows arithmetically, population growth is going to always outstrip food production.

I go to the places where famine was averted: India and Pakistan. That means that people who would've otherwise died of famine lived to have more children, and those children then lived to have more children. Today India is about to surpass China as the most populous nation on the planet. And Pakistan has one of the fastest birth rates in the world, and it's one of the places that scares me the most. They've got between 185 and 190 million people today, and they're the size of Texas. By the end of the century, they're going to have many more people than the United States has now, and they're still going to be the size of Texas. [Pakistan's] economy is nowhere capable of employing all these people. So everywhere you see all these frustrated, sullen, pissed-off young men. In the cities, usually the best job they can get is being hired thugs for warlords, or in the north, it's

kind of a breeding territory for what we here refer to as terrorists. And this is a country that is a nuclear power. Kind of scary.

**RR: Before I get to some of your points, I want to ask: Now that we're at seven-plus billion people, is there an optimal number of people?**

**AW:** There probably is, but there are a few ways to consider what that optimum would be.

First, I dismiss the opinions that we do not have a problem with the number of people. There are pro-growth economists who always talk about *the more people, the better*, partly because it's more consumers, but what they're really talking about is that supply of cheap labor. Then those poor people compete with each other for salaries that are oftentimes really depressed, if not just

Pope Benedict XVI issued an encyclical [a papal letter addressing Catholic doctrine], and he said there's enough for everybody, if we got very creative. I went and asked a couple of questions. One was obvious: How could they still be denying that we have a population problem [and keep saying that] contraception is a sin? They had lots of answers, and they also had answers for how we were going to feed everybody.

But one they could not answer because they hadn't thought about it [was]: When the pope says we have enough food to feed everybody, who's he talking about? Is he talking about just human beings, or is he talking about the other animals, our companions on this planet, without whom we could not survive? We are part of an ecosystem, and our whole food supply and all kinds of other things all depend upon an ecosystem for pollination, for hold-

man population?

**AW:** Every religion, just like every nation, starts out with this mandate to be fruitful and multiply. It's a strategy: have a bunch of kids, so you can be the biggest nation or tribe or religion around. So, all religions start out as polygamous. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were polygamous; Muhammad was polygamous. Then they get very numerous, very fast, and the extremists in those religions don't grow with the times.

But I talked to a lot of different people from different religions, and it turns out that many religions have in their histories or their liturgies – it's in the Quran, it's in the Bible, it's in the Buddhist literature – a mandate to take care of the Earth, and to take care of our children and be responsible to them. And a lot of rabbis, priests, evangelical Christians, imams, Buddhist monks don't have a problem with contraception.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, they realized [that] after encouraging huge population growth, they were basically going to be Pakistan: too many men and unable to employ them all. So they reversed course, including issuing a *fatwa* saying that if wisdom dictates you've hit the number of kids you can take care of, there's nothing in the Quran that says you can't use anything from condoms to a vasectomy or tubal ligation. And Iran, using the blessing of its high mullah of Islam, was able to turn around their population growth rather quickly. So as always, religion is a double-edged sword.

But I specifically talked to [representatives of] a lot of religions for this book because I don't think the way to really deal with the problems we are facing is to have some world government tell people, "You have to stop doing what you were doing." That's not going to fly everywhere. But if I could discover a way where, within their own belief systems, they had allowances in time of need? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they're all polygamists, and then you get down to Joseph, one of 13 kids of Jacob's: he is very observant, and he realizes the world is entering a time of scarcity. He only has one wife, two kids, and he counsels the Israelites and the Pharaoh of Egypt that this is a time to refrain from embracing so much. I think that might be relevant to the times we're living in right now.

And for less than the amount of money we were spending per month in Af-

WEISMAN, page 17

**RR: How does spirituality tie into hu-**

**“Here we are at 7.2 billion [people], heading toward 11 billion. We’re not going to make it. It’s going to get very, very problematic.”**

plain inhuman.

We've got another contingent that thinks we're not anywhere near the optimal population, people who say that there's plenty of food on this planet, and we could feed everybody if we just shared better. Well, first of all, we're not going to do that. Most food today is grown, not for feeding people, but because it's a commodity. It's something that people sell for profit. They're not going to give away their commodity for free. I wish it were the case, but they don't. So the idea of being equitable and sharing has always been more ideal than reality. [Pause.] I'm sorry if you find that depressing.

**RR: It's not that I find it depressing, but we always say how much we share.**

**AW:** That's a fallacy. [He chuckles.] Yes, people donate to charities, but to really spread the wealth equitably? It's not happening. It's *out of sight, out of mind*. Look: if there were enough food to feed everyone on this planet, then why are one billion people severely malnourished? If we can do it, why aren't we doing it?

The other consideration, and one reason I went to the Vatican, was [that]

ing water in the soil, for seed spreading, for insect devouring. There's a whole lot we get from an ecosystem. And it turns out that nobody had an answer for that one.

The same story is in both Judeo-Christian history and in the Quran. We start out on the planet, God says, "Be fruitful and multiply." That's Genesis, Chapter 2. By Genesis, Chapter 5, God is already sick of us. Our excesses are beyond anything, and He's going to flood the place and start over. But He strikes this deal with Noah: "OK, let's save a couple of good people and start it over, right." But what does He tell Noah? "You can save your sons, and you can save their wives and you can save their children. But you also have to save all the animals. You cannot have a world without them."

Later on I went to India. The Hindus are the same way. They've got this huge pantheon of different faces of God, and most of them are animals. They see God everywhere. Now we live this technolife, and we can spend our whole day without seeing any animals, but that doesn't mean that we don't use them or that we don't depend on them.

## Inocente at the Oscars

continued from page 11

mother and daughter sit quietly in a room as the adults discuss the benefits of Inocente entering the group home. The mother weeps.

"Adelante, Inocente," Carmela says. "Go ahead."

Scenes like that, Inocente said by phone, are hard to watch. When the documentary was made, she didn't see many of Carmela's scenes being filmed. Watching the movie, Inocente learned how much her mother cared for her, the pride she felt.

Inocente only lived in the group home for six months, then stayed with her mother again before an ARTS staff member co-signed for Inocente to get an apartment. She's been there two years but plans to move into another apartment – with her mother.

"About the time kids are moving out," Inocente said, "I'll be moving back in."

**And the Oscar goes to...**

When Inocente heard the film was nominated for an Academy Award, she didn't know what to think. After all, she'd never seen an Oscars telecast.

Filmmakers Sean Fine and Andrea Nix Fine had. Their previous film, *War Dance*, had been nominated in 2008 for Best Documentary. Inocente said the filmmakers passed their excitement about the nomination on to her. They even provided her a ticket to sit with movie stars on the main floor of the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Inocente said she was nervous that night, particularly because of her shoes. "I don't wear heels, and I had these big heels on," she said.

Then actor Kerry Washington announced *Inocente* as the documentary short-winner.

Inocente followed the filmmakers onto the stage. On the off-chance the film might win, they had discussed what to say during their few seconds. (Win-

## Alan Weisman interview on overpopulation

continued from page 16

ghanistan and Iraq, we could spend that money per year to buy contraception for everybody on the planet who wants it. It's a little over \$8 billion. That's not a lot money these days.

**RR: You talk about one great form of birth control: educated women.**

**AW:** It's the best contraception of all.

The educated woman, she tends to stay in school till her studies are done, before child bearing. Most educated women tend to have one or two kids.

It's such an enormous benefit, because if population declines, we're going to have fewer kids but this big bubble of old people. There's going to be labor issues. Who's going to do the work? Well, having all these educated women, we're tapping into this wonderful resource we have. Here we are at 7.2 billion [people], heading toward 11 billion. We're not going to make it. It's going to get very, very problematic.

**RR: Why did you decide to find out about population growth and potential control?**

**AW:** I don't know if you read my last book, *The World Without Us*, but I wrote that because I really want a world

with us. I think what we really want to do is stick around. There's an interview with someone from the Voluntary [Human] Extinction Movement.

His belief and his organization's is that we've just gone too far, and the human presence on this planet is destroying everything. Not only are we destroying our own future, but other species'. So the main idea is to just stop procreating, and we can have the Garden of Eden restored on the planet.

Well, after I heard that, I thought it was interesting because on the one hand, it sounded like a bunch of crap, but on the other hand, it was describing what my book was. And I'm really not ready for humans to go extinct. I like *Homo sapiens*. I'm married to one.

So there were these astronomical numbers, and they're just too hard to grasp. So I did some long division. And it turned out that every four-and-a-half days, we're adding a million people to the planet. That got my attention, and that got a lot of readers' attention. So I left that hanging at the end of *The World Without Us*. And I realized it's pretty interesting. It's such a loaded topic, people are very emotional about it. We talk about bears and wolves and balance in a national park – but this is about *us*. I wondered: could we realistically do this? Which is why I went to so many countries. It was a much

ners get 30 seconds from the time their name is called until the stage microphone turns off and the music swells.)

Sean Fine motioned to Inocente and said, "[She] was homeless just a year ago, and now she's standing in front of all of you," he said. "She's an artist and all of you are artists." He asked them to support arts education.

Keeping her balance in her heels, Inocente said she attended the Vanity Fair post-Oscar Party. Three-time Oscar winner Daniel Day Lewis gave her a kiss. When she saw Adrian Brody, a Best Actor winner in 2002 for *The Pianist*, she told him she liked his nose.

"I think he was a little creeped-out," she said.

Still, the formerly-homeless teen enjoyed Tinseltown's glamour and glitz. Accustomed to wearing jeans and casual shirts, Inocente dressed up in an off-white evening gown, on loan from an L.A. stylist.

She spilled chocolate on it, "But it's

bigger project that I bargained for. I'm still alive, but there were times where I wondered if the book would finish me before I finished the book.

**RR: I hope this isn't too personal of a question: How big is your family?**

**AW:** My wife and I had a daughter, and, unfortunately, she died in infancy.

It's one of life's tragedies. They hit us all. We had some pregnancies after that, but none of them lasted. In retrospect, I wish we would've pursued adoption. Adoption agencies don't like the idea that I travel so much, and we thought about foreign adoption, but I've worked in a lot of countries where my colleagues are incensed that their countries have become baby farms to the U.S. It was hard for us to deal with that. Looking back now, I wish we'd done it, anyway.

But that brings up something else. People who think that large families are beautiful can still have them. The one natural resource we're not running out of is kids who need a home. So adoption is a wonderful thing.

**RR: You said earlier this might sound a little depressing. So do you consider yourself a pessimist?**

**AW:** No, I consider myself a realist and a journalist. Again, being a *Homo*

Oscar chocolate," she said, "so hopefully they don't mind too much."

Since the win, she said she's continued to paint. She supports herself by selling her artwork on her website, [inocenteart.com](http://inocenteart.com). The walls in her current apartment have close to 40 paintings, half of which are unfinished. When she moves in with her mother and brothers later this year, she said they'll have to find space for her art.

Along with painting, Inocente said she loves traveling and meeting people at screenings. After a recent guest stint as a circus clown, she said she wants to travel with a circus for a year. Even though she rarely paints her face anymore, she liked the idea of colored hair, so she bought a purple wig. She plans to wear it in Seattle.

When she was homeless, Inocente said she never predicted her life would experience such a turnaround: "So this is definitely a dream."

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / *Real Change* – USA

*sapiens* myself, it's hard not to react emotionally. But I've realized that my species is too much of a good thing, and we are overwhelming the system that supports us. That can't go on forever. I think that we're in a make-or-break century right now. Here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there's no way we can continue on with what's going on with the atmosphere and temperatures. There are only so many tricks to grow more food. Rice is probably the most important food on the planet, given the number of people who depend on it. A lot of people would be ruined if the seas rise. Do we have the money to put dikes all along Asia and the Philippine Islands?

It's hard to grasp this, because you and I were born in the midst of the population explosion. This is what we think of as normal. But it's very abnormal. And it's creeping up ever-so-slightly.

Fortunately, contraception is the technology we have: it's cheap, and there are wonderful side benefits. Educate a lot of women, and they become contributors to societies and economies.

We're always talking about social inequity. It's one of the fastest ways I can think of for spreading the wealth around.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / *Real Change* – USA



## Sharing homes

by Alexandra Bolton

*Real Change News – Seattle, USA, 4/21/2014*

In early mornings, Marquis McCrary had to walk at least 2 miles, often in the dark, to get to the bus and his three-hour round-trip commute from Spanaway to Tacoma. He was trying to earn his GED through a program called YouthBuild, which also offered him job training through a construction pre-apprenticeship program. At 21, McCrary had not finished high school. Instead, he helped his single mother raise his four younger siblings.

Back in Texas, McCrary's mom and siblings live in a shelter. McCrary moved in with his brother in Spanaway to get out of the shelter, himself. He left behind his family and a community richer in activities and friends. In Texas, McCrary felt he was growing and better able to keep himself busy.

"When I got to Spanaway, it was just me and my brother," said McCrary. "It wasn't enough for me."

The resources at YouthBuild somewhat eased McCrary's frustration and sense of isolation, but the commute added new challenges. Meanwhile, the situation at his brother's grew uncomfortable. After being homeless for several nights, McCrary realized he needed to find another place to stay.

He found one after being referred to Shared Housing Services through Tacoma's sole entry point into the housing resource system, Access Point 4 Housing.

At Shared Housing Services in Tacoma, housing specialist Bobby Ocasio connected McCrary to homeowner Christina Jarman, an accountant and loan counselor with extra space in her large, four-bedroom home in Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood.

The Host Home Program (HHP), which was launched in December 2012, matches young people experiencing homelessness with people in the community with space to spare. It provides a \$400 monthly stipend to the homeowner to help with utilities, mortgage or other costs. In addition to housing, the youth gets an adult figure to provide mentorship. Partner agencies provide case management.



Living with Christina Jarman in her four-bedroom home has given Marquis McCrary access to many local resources in the Tacoma area, including the opportunity to perform rap music at B Sharp Coffee House in Opera Alley, above. Photo by Daniel Bassett

"Our goal is to have [homelessness] be something they are experiencing and not a title that they are going to hold and carry the rest of their lives," Ocasio said.

HHP is innovative for Washington State. It is part of a collaborative effort called Housing 4 Success that offers two other housing tracks for young people experiencing homelessness: independent housing in apartments and shared housing for students in the Bethel School District. HHP housed 40 individuals under the age of 24 during its first year.

McCrary's host, Jarman, works for the Homeownership Center of Tacoma. She said she had the idea of sharing her extra space before she even bought the home. Shortly after moving in, she became involved in Shared Housing Services' adult home-sharing program, which serves as the model for the HHP.

Jarman had two adult housemates before McCrary and remains friends with them. She said she's benefitted from sharing her home with others.

"In every situation, I've grown. Yeah, I've opened my door and made the facilities available, but I've learned in return," Jarman said.

The historic house was built in 1905

said. "I'm not your mother. We're housemates. So you help and I help, and we keep the house going."

In addition to integrating into the household, McCrary has taken advantage of his new location to further his goals. He got his GED through YouthBuild in December 2013 and is now planning to attend Bates Technical College in the Broadcasting and Audio/Visual Production program. He can walk to many other local places like Dash Center for the Arts and Fabitat, which offers a creative space for artistic expression and education.

Music and the spoken word are McCrary's passions, and he has found opportunity for them in Tacoma. He performs at B Sharp Coffee House in Opera Alley and has been a disc jockey on KUPS 90.1 FM, the University of Puget Sound's student radio station. He writes poetry, and he has worked with Tacoma's 2013-2015 poet laureate Lucas Smiraldo. McCrary is also developing a music video associated with a local film about a fictional rapper growing up homeless. Grand Marquis, McCrary's rapper identity, has become an active presence in the Tacoma community.

"I haven't seen him in a couple months, and I'm amazed by what he's doing," Ocasio said. "The ultimate goal is self-sufficiency. So, him going to Bates and being able to get a degree or get skills and get a job, a good-paying job after he's on his own: He's on his way."

McCrary has more specific plans, including moving back to Texas, interning at a record label in Austin and taking in his younger brothers, once he is established. And, of course, he'd like to own a Grand Marquis someday.

At the moment, he is grateful for his surroundings.

"It is truly a blessing to be here," he said.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / *Real Change* – USA



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## Voices of homeless youth

by Angela Harvey

*Street Sense – Washington, D.C., USA, 3/15/2014*

Swami experienced homelessness at eight years of age, after his mother lost her job and could no longer afford the rent on their Illinois apartment.

For two years, the mother and son lived in shelters, until his mother found employment and they got a stable place. Things started normalizing and "life was somewhat peaceful." But at age 12, Swami was removed from his home by the state Department of Children and Family Services after reports of abuse and neglect.

Thus began his two-year journey through the foster care system. Swami, 19, now a sophomore at the University of Illinois, wrote in an essay that he had seven foster-care placements and "about 700 horrifying memories to accompany those placements."

Swami shared his story on June 17 during a discussion at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C., along with 12 other young adults who experienced homelessness as minors. They are college students from across the country who received a \$2,000 scholarship a year-and-a-half ago from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

"We want policymakers to hear directly from the youths," said Barbara Duffield, policy director of the Association. Several congressional staff members attended the discussion. She hopes they share with their bosses "an understanding of why youths become homeless, and of the gaps in the services available to them."

Nationally, more than 1 million children experienced homelessness during the 2010-11 school year – a 14 percent increase from the previous year. In the District, there were more than 3,000 homeless residents enrolled in school during the 2010-11 school year, representing a 22 percent increase in one year, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The Department of Education defines homelessness as being without a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. This includes those who are sharing the housing of others; living in hotels and motels, trailer parks, camping grounds, emergency or transitional housing; awaiting foster care placement; and living in areas not designed for sleeping or in substandard housing.

"Education is an important way for young people to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness in their families," said Barb Dexter, a homeless education liaison for the Anchorage School District, who moderated the discussion.

Although the individual stories were unique, several commonalities were shared when students identified factors that contributed to their family's unstable housing situation: working parents unable to afford housing, single parents, parents with drug or alcohol addictions, incarcerated parents, parents with health problems, being kicked out, and leaving to escape "family drama" such as domestic violence.

"When you're in a situation where the ones causing all of your heartache and stress is your family, you really don't have anyone to turn to," said Raven, 20,

chance at completing high school, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires states to have a state coordinator for homeless education and a homeless education liaison in each school district. Some of the larger districts often have their own homeless education programs, said Jan Moore, a program specialist at the National Center for Homeless Education, a technical assistance center that works with school districts to make sure the law is implemented.

The law focuses on school access and success. Each state gets federal money that is disbursed to the school districts through a competitive sub-grant program. The school district liaison is responsible for working with students to remove barriers to enrollment, to maintain satisfactory attendance, and to reach academic achievement standards.

**"We want policymakers to hear directly from the youths [to get] an understanding of why youths become homeless, and of the gaps in the services available to them." – Barbara Duffield, Policy Director, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth**

a sophomore at Louisiana State University. "Teachers and counselors might listen, but they can't understand what you're going through."

Nicholas, 20, a sophomore at the University of North Carolina, said he focused on work to avoid dealing with his reality. "If you keep your mind busy, you don't have time to think of where am I going to sleep, or when is the next time I'm going to get food?"

Several students described being reluctant to disclose their living situation or lack of parental involvement with teachers and school administrators due to embarrassment or not wanting to be labeled as a troubled youth.

"When a teenager is homeless, a lot of people think they are a problem child or that it must be something that they've done," said Tina, 20, a junior at Salem State University. "But that's usually not the case. We are the victims of our parents' decisions or unfortunate situations."

To ensure that students who are experiencing homelessness have the best

Children and youths are immediately enrolled in school regardless of disputes over school selection or placement, or missing information such as birth certificates and immunization record. In addition, states have guaranteed access to additional educational services needed in order to meet state student academic achievement standards.

Annual state performance reports monitor the school districts' adherence to the law and compare the districts receiving grants to the ones that are not, Moore said.

"The McKinney-Vento is a non-funded mandate. Only about 9 percent of school districts get subgrants," Moore said. "The other 91 percent are serving kids without receiving any federal funds, and the burden falls on the school districts."

A majority of the students at the discussion credited involved teachers and education support professionals with helping them excel in school and make it into college, saying they were advocates who often filled the role of a substitute parent.

"I had a phenomenal support group of four teachers who I called my Four Moms," said Spencer, 20, a junior at University of Wisconsin. "They made sure I went to school and kept my grades up. They always made sure I had what I needed, if it was a bed that night, or food, or whatever. Without their support I definitely would not be where I am right now."

Irene, 19, a junior at Texas State University, said a supportive guidance counselor encouraged her to go to college because of her high academic achievement, but worries there are students who might not get the same type of help.

"It wasn't until the school noticed I had good grades that I felt like I was important," she said. "There are so many kids with problems who don't get good grades and are not going to get noticed."

For students who were considered to be unaccompanied youths, their lack of guardianship made it difficult for them to meet certain requirements, or to utilize programs available for low-income families. Many recalled forging their parents' signatures on report cards and other forms. Many said they were not able to apply for free and reduced lunch, or for financial aid for college because they did not have someone to fill out the applications.

"Being in a position where I was unaccompanied and not necessarily adopted by someone else left me with no guardianship," said Tia, 19, a sophomore at Meredith College.

Their experience with homelessness or broken families is not far from the students' minds as they continue their college educations. Some have taken on the legal guardianship of younger siblings. Others said they struggle to pay for housing and tuition due to a lack of financial support from parents or guardians. These are reasons why it was important for them to have the discussion in Washington, D.C., to hopefully encourage changes in education policies that affect children in similar situations.

"I want lawmakers to be compelled to do something," Duffield said. "You have to be educated, but you also have to be moved, and that's what these kids' stories do."

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / *Street Sense* – USA



## Dalai Lama heals vendor

by Hobo John

*Street Roots – Portland, OR, USA,  
6/10/2013*

I was a little manic several springs back on the streets of a small Texas town called Mansfield. The police and I had been through several run-ins, which resulted in my landing in a Fort Worth mental hospital. Being a ward of the state scared me a bit, because they'd decide when I'd be released. Also, at the point in my life, I didn't trust much of anything or anybody.

Shortly after my arrival, they took me to a wing that seemed to take forever to get to. My imagination was running pretty wild: straight-jackets, electric shocks, that type of thing. When we arrived, someone in the lobby was reading a copy of a book written by the Dalai Lama. I consider myself a spiritual person and at that point I had read a couple of books by the Tibetan holy man. Seeing his picture calmed me and reminded me that God's love is everywhere, and I would get through this.

Back in January, when I saw a billboard saying that the Dalai Lama would be in Portland, it created some anxiety within me. First of all, how would I afford a ticket, and then let's say I did get to see him, and God's ambassador of compassion didn't care much for my hobo ass. Eventually I checked the website for the event and saw that I could apply for press pass online, which I went ahead and did, using Street Roots as "my organization." Thing is, I didn't asked Streets Roots – kind of manipulative, I know, and one of the list of about a thousand things I am working on improving. Well, they scolded me a little but said I could attend.

My homeless adventure started about 10 years ago in Florida Keys. I was working as a newspaper reporter for a small weekly called the Islamorada Free Press when a memory surfaced of being molested as a kid by my judo instructor. I had always remembered part of that night, but this repressed part was violent and, in my mind, disgusting. It created some post-traumatic stress disorder and severe panic attacks. At times in my mind, I was a nine-year-old kid once again and this guy was after me.

I was a decent reporter and was able to stop a crooked sewer deal between a local politician and some bigwig lobbyists, but the job caused me a lot of anxiety. I was also a complete ass to work with, and simply did not feel safe being in one spot, where my attacker might find me again. Eventually, I lost my job and found myself homeless, which allowed me to drift.

The Dalai Lama speaks, as I imagine Christ spoke, with authority. It was an environmental conference, and if you are alive you know that we have been poor stewards of the earth. I attended several events over two days at the University of Portland and Memorial Coliseum. Typical of His Holiness, he said little about the environment and focused on trying to get us to be better people. I like his approach – how can we expect to take care of nature when we don't take care of each other? Another thing he said really struck me: "God created the earth; it too is one of his creations; if you respect and love God, you must respect the earth and take care of her."

Christ tells us to love our enemies and I take that seriously. However, I developed an aggressive, sarcastic tongue over the first 40 years of my life and dismantling it hasn't been easy. Not that I have a lot of enemies, but on the streets you tend to get your fair share of scorn, and worse for me – people completely ignoring you when you are trying to talk to them. I even had my Street Roots badge yanked a couple of times, for giving people lip. So, when the Dalai Lama said, "do no harm," which is a beginning tenant in both Buddhism and Hinduism, I made a vow to double my effort in reigning in my tongue. When you make an oath like that, God will sometimes ask, "really?"

The next day, I was talking to a buddy



His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, gave one of several lectures in the Portland area as part of the June 2013 Environmental Summit sponsored by Maitripa College.

standing next to my shopping cart. Every once in a while my shopping cart will set someone off, as they may have been on the streets themselves, or are getting close to landing there. This guy I had never seen before starts yelling at me, "F\_\_ you," from halfway down the street. He keeps yelling it over and over until he is right in front of me with his middle finger right in my face. I just stood there smiling. This seemed to irritate him a little, and so he proceeded to stick that finger straight up my nose. Unfortunately I did not turn the other nostril. I spun him around; bear hugged him a little, told him to never touch me again and shoved him on his way. I am not proud of that, but that is what forgiveness is for, that is also life – we live and learn.

I had another chance later that night. I was lying on my bag in a doorway when a group of kids in a car saw me and start yelling, "You're a lazy bum, what a f\_\_ing bum," etc. Well, I just lay there feeling peaceful and smiling at them. Turn the other cheek works and, seeing no resistance, they sped off.

Tibetan Buddhism teaches that com-

passion is the desire to relieve the suffering of another. What does compassion look like? Well, according to the Dalai Lama, compassion looks like affection. He used that word repeatedly throughout the conference and displayed it endlessly.

At the end, the key organizer of the event, Yangsi Rinpoche, president of Maitripa College in Portland, was bowing at the Dalai Lama's feet. His Holiness was rubbing his head and telling the audience what a good boy he was and how much he loved him. Yangsi sat there soaking up the love, just like the rest of us. After that, the Red Hot Chili Peppers played for about an hour. I have always respected the Peppers, while not being a huge fan; some of their music is too discordant for me. But I do love several songs, and they played like beasts. Their third number was Scar Tissue. After the opening chords I was crying like a baby, grateful for the healing of my scars. I guess the shadowy figure from my past has been forgiven and is loved – by me, at least. I am at peace and happy on the streets. I am also incredibly grateful to encounter His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, a living embodiment of Christ's teachings here on earth.

Source: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org) / *Street Roots – USA*

**"I like his approach – can we expect to take care of nature when we don't take care of each other?"**

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